

THE Atlantic MONTHLY

SEPTEMBER 2003

The Age of Murdoch

How one man's vision of the media business became everybody's

BY JAMES FALLOWS

Anarchy at Sea

The oceans remain defiantly beyond control—a realm of chaos and freedom and crime

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

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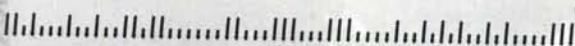
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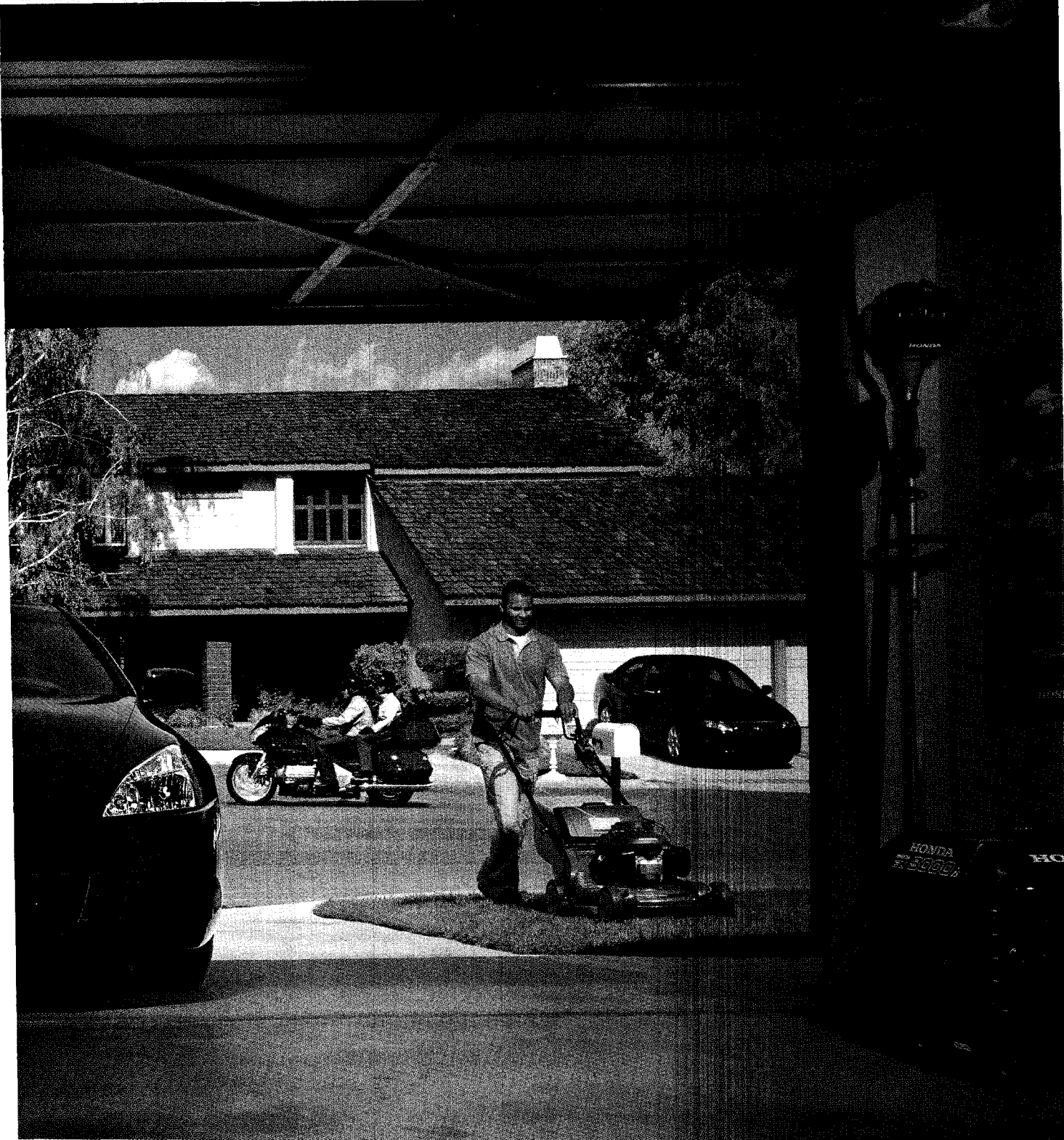
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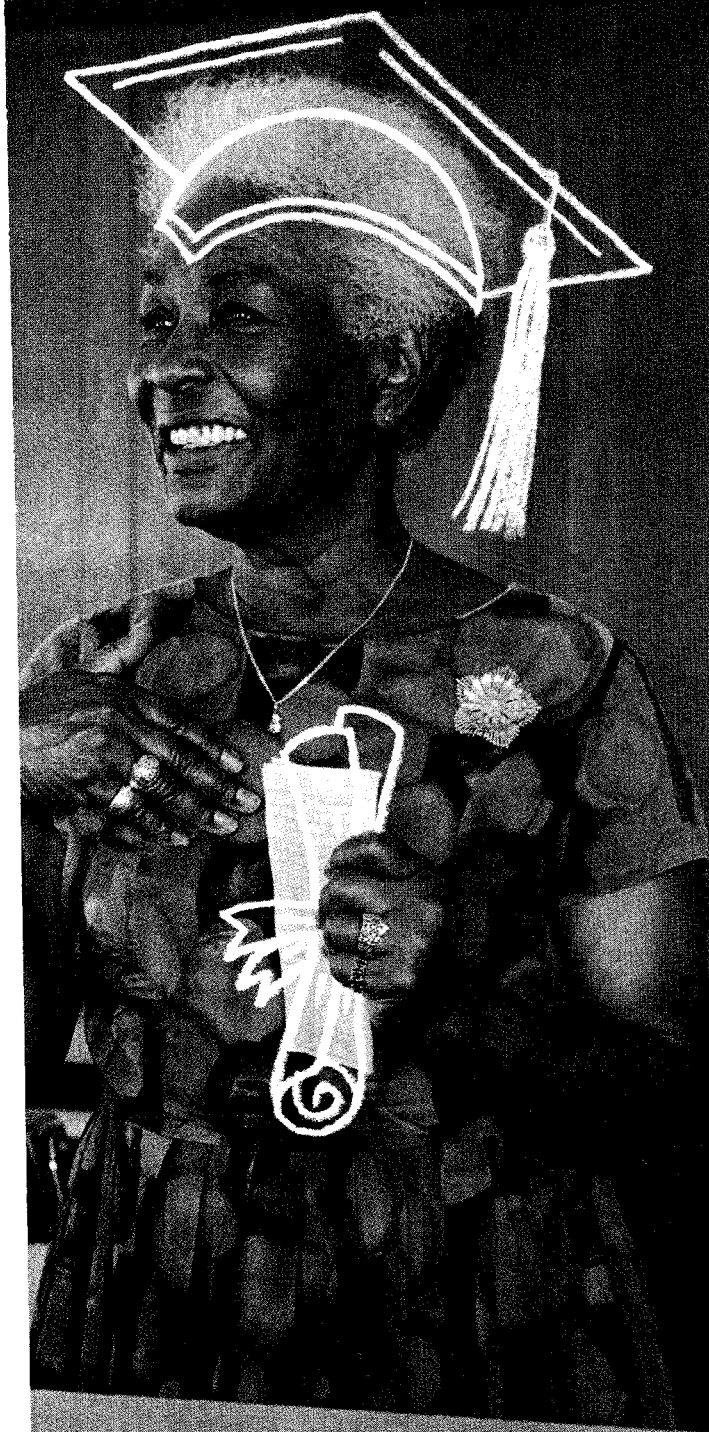
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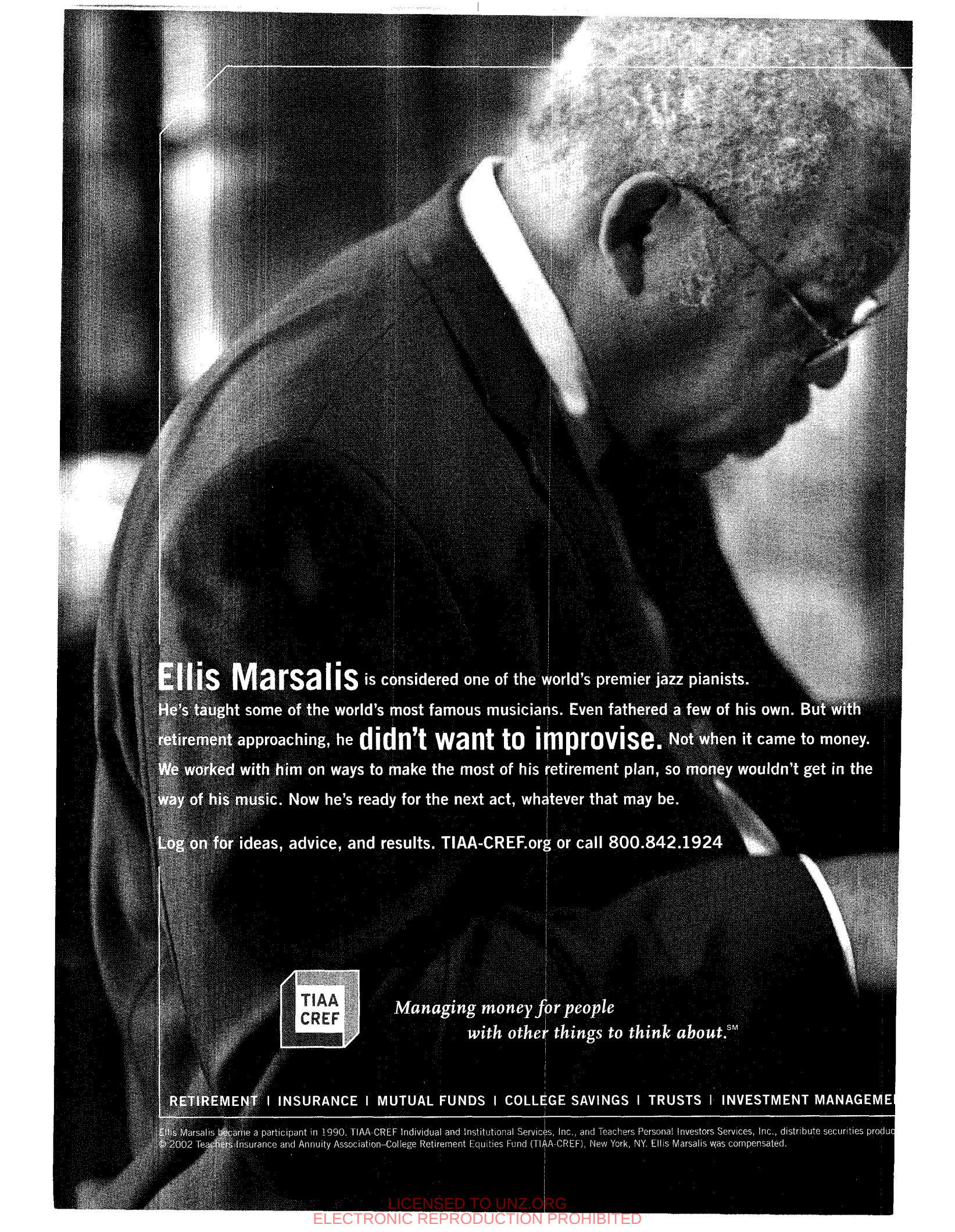
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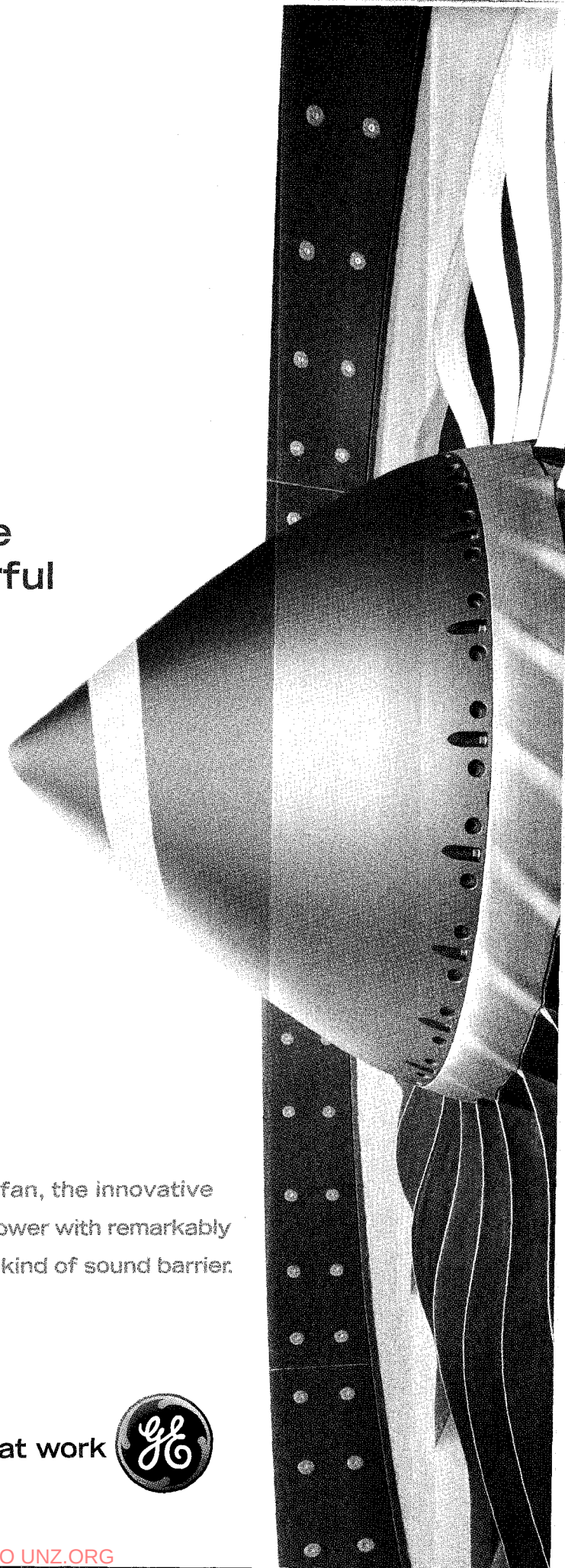
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THE Atlantic

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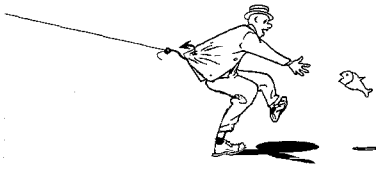
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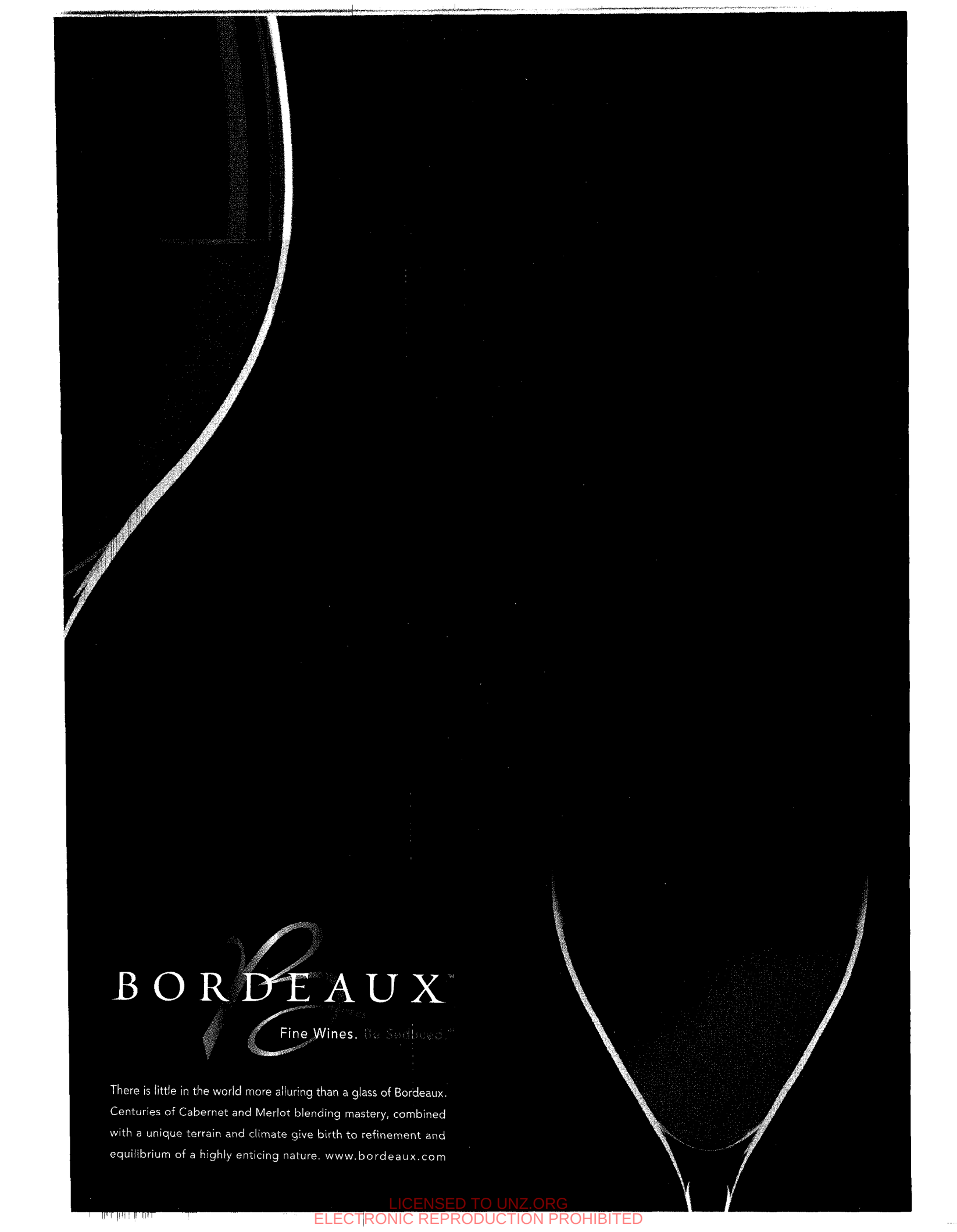
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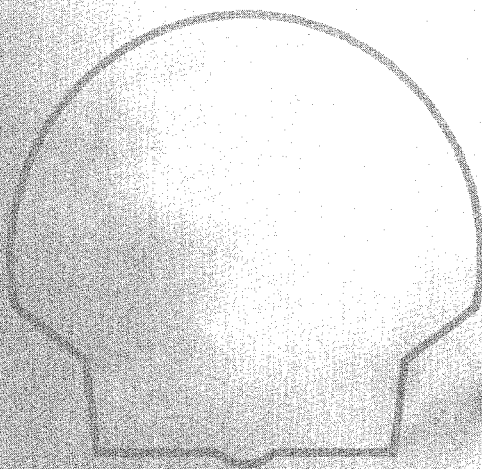


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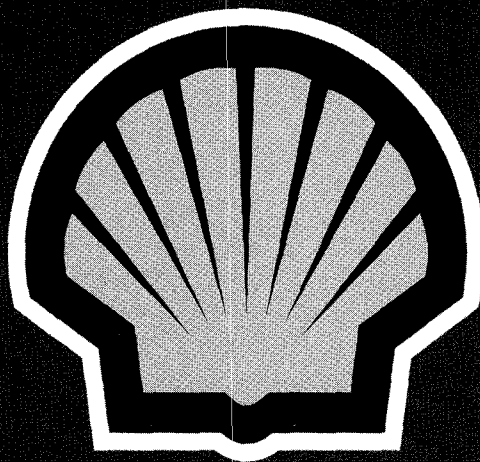


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This month on the Web . . .

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H. W. Brands "Founders Chic," his article in this issue.

Politics & Prose: A monthly column
A Column by Jack Beatty on newly published books and political and cultural trends, by one of *The Atlantic's* senior editors.

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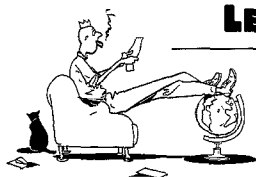
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Who Shot Mohammed al-Dura?

I appreciated the thoughtful examination of a horrific event in "Who Shot Mohammed al-Dura?" by James Fallows (*June Atlantic*), but I detect a discrepancy between the diagram indicating the positions of the al-Dura son and father (a primary example of the exculpatory evidence for the Israel Defense Forces cited here) and the photos on the succeeding page.

I have not seen the video from which these stills are taken, nor have I been exposed to the breadth of material made available to Fallows in his investigation. Nevertheless, I'm a photographer as well as a journalist, and like anyone who works with cameras, I tend to look at photos with some care. The two frames reproduced in your pages appear to have been shot with approximately a 400mm telephoto lens from an angle not perpendicular to the wall but roughly 30 degrees behind the subjects (Talal Abu-Rahma, the cameraman, could perhaps confirm or refute this impression).

What first struck me about the photos is that, even allowing for the skewing effect of the camera angle and the flattening effect of the long lens, both son and father appear far more vulnerable to gunfire from the position attributed to the IDF than is indicated in the diagram, in which they seem completely shielded by the concrete cylinder. In the top photo, for example, the shadow between the cylinder and the father's legs suggests that his knees and lower legs would have been exposed to at least some fire from that direction, which means that the boy crouching behind him—whose legs are outside of his father's—would have been in similar if not greater peril.

The second frame reinforces this impression. After he is hit, the father's knees clearly fall *outside* of the barrel, which would have been impossible were he positioned as in the diagram. In the same

way, the boy's prone position on the father's feet—again, outside the knees that are outside the barrel—suggests that the barrel could not have completely shielded him from gunfire coming from the IDF's position. The disturbing conclusion is that the diagram (even accepting its rosy assumption of neatly parallel and contained lines of fire from the Israelis) is inaccurate. It seems bizarre to discuss an emotional event in such clinical terms, but in such a context careful interpretation of visual evidence is essential. If this diagram resulted from the investigations and re-enactments Fallows cites, they are of dubious value, and the reluctance of the Israeli authorities to make much of them acquires additional meaning.

Cary Groner
Junction City, Calif.

James Fallows has raised some extraordinary claims with the flimsiest of evidence. Without interviewing a single person present at the scene—not the victim's father, not the Israeli soldiers, not the Palestinian security forces, not even the cameraman who shot the film—he has all but concluded that the al-Dura shooting was an elaborate hoax concocted by the Palestinians. He relies on a woefully misleading diagram suggesting that a concrete barrel was so large as to block the Israelis' line of fire, but the photograph on the following page clearly shows that the barrel was not big enough to provide cover for Mohammed and his father. Amazingly, he advances this theory despite its rejection by the party that would have the most to gain from its acceptance: the Israeli army.

Steven Freedman
Philadelphia, Pa.

James Fallows writes, "The footage of the shooting ... illustrates the way in which television transforms reality" and, notably, "France 2 or its cameraman may

have footage that it or he has chosen not to release." We do not transform reality. But since some parts of the scene are unbearable, France 2 cut a few seconds from the scene, in accordance with our ethical charter.

Charles Enderlin
Bureau Chief, France 2
Jerusalem, Israel

I am referred to in James Fallows's "Who Shot Mohammed al-Dura?" but, unfortunately, the author never spoke to me. I am referring to the following quotes:

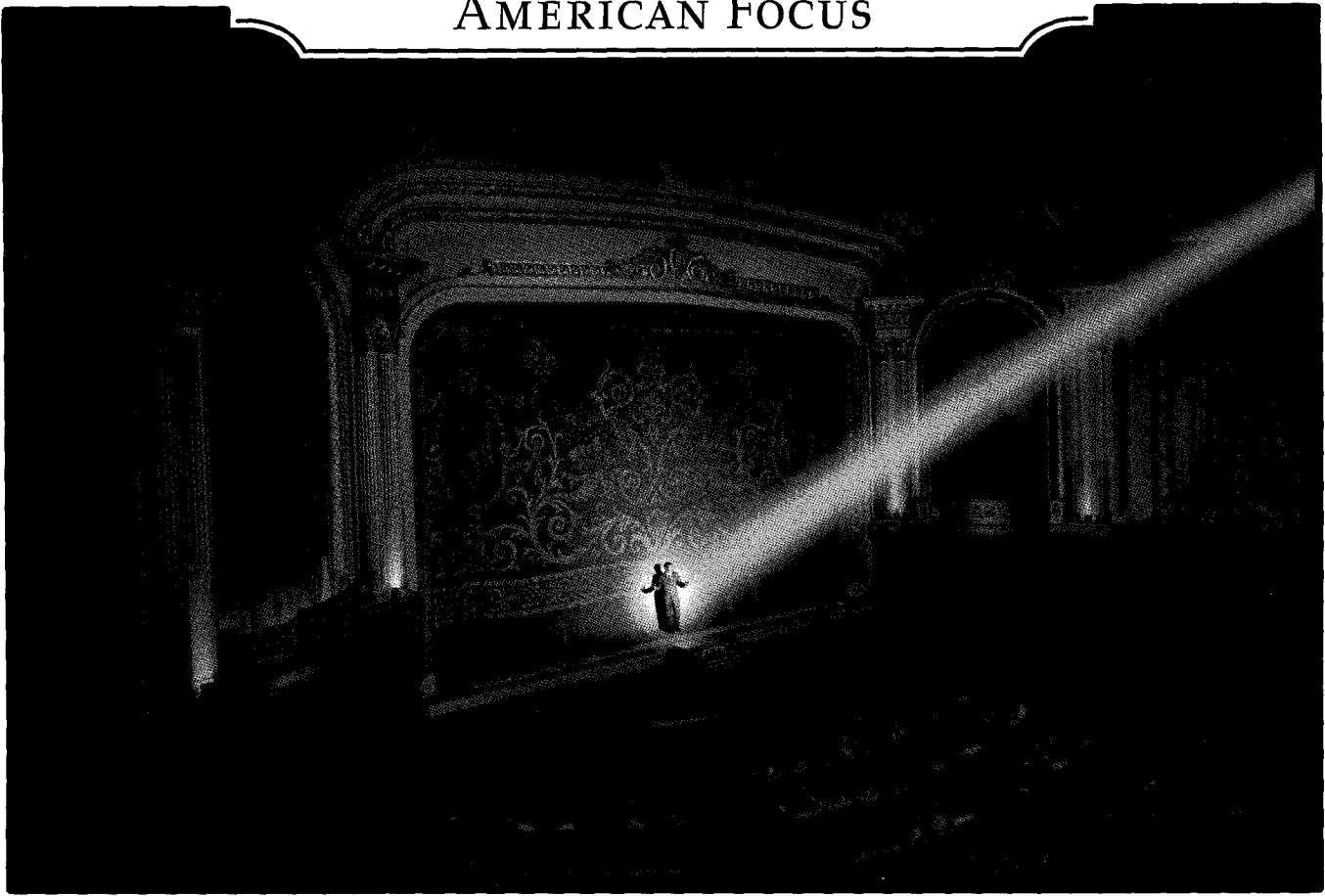
"Amnon Lord, writing for the magazine *Makor Rishon*, referred to a German documentary directed by Esther Schapira that was 'based on Shahaf's own decisive conclusion' and that determined 'that Muhammad Al-Dura was not killed by IDF gunfire at Netzarim junction.'"

"Schapira had collaborated with him for the German documentary and then produced a film advancing the 'minimum' version of his case, showing that the shots did not, could not have, come from the IDF outpost. She disappointed him by not embracing the maximum version—the all-encompassing hoax—and counseled him not to talk about a staged event unless he could produce a living boy or a cooperative eyewitness. Shahaf said that he still thought well of her, and that he was not discouraged."

Please note that my film is not based on Shahaf's "decisive conclusion" and that I did not collaborate with him for the documentary.

I did talk to Nahum Shahaf, the same way I talked to everybody involved in the story. He presented his findings to me as well as his conclusion that the whole thing was a setup and the boy was still alive. Until this day I have seen no proof for that conclusion, and I believe I am familiar with the video footage you mention as well as with the rest of

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the material. In the end I decided to leave Shahaf out of my film completely.

In my documentary you will find a number of serious questions and interesting details that I have asked and presented for the first time, including the contradiction between Charles Enderlin and his cameraman, Talal Abu-Rahma, concerning the length of the filmed material: Enderlin claims he has published everything he has—fifty-two seconds; his cameraman says he filmed six minutes of the scene.

My film does not conclude that I know the answer to the question “Who shot Mohammed al-Dura?” I’ve always said that I see more significant hints (but no proof) that he was shot by Palestinians. The film doesn’t present a final conclusion. It presents the findings of my own research and no speculations.

Esther Schapira
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

I want to thank James Fallows for confirming what my eyeballs told me from about the third time I saw the tape. I don’t believe anyone ever panned over to the Israeli position. It was just described as being some number of yards to the right. I am not a terribly experienced combat hand, but enough of one to know that bullets don’t go around corners. My instincts and experience informed me that the fire had to be coming from within a very few degrees of the location of the camera. I wonder what would happen if some combat vets watched the tape several times and were then asked where the shots came from. It also seems to me that the cameraman is a liar if he denies knowing that the fire came from near his location. The azimuth was limited both by the barrel and by the position of the father’s body. The range was limited by “the Pita.” I took a lot of ribbing from my friends over this, and now I have some authoritative arguments to muster on my side.

Bob Vitray
Austin, Texas

James Fallows’s statements that “the Israeli policy of promoting settlements in occupied territory, and the Palestinian policy of terror, are deeper obstacles” and that “there would never

have been a showdown at the Netzarim crossroads, or any images of Mohammed al-Dura’s shooting to be parsed in different ways, if there were no settlement nearby for IDF soldiers to protect ...” need to go down to a deeper layer. If the Palestinians had accepted the deal offered in 2000 at Camp David, there wouldn’t have been any need for protection of the settlement, because the war of terrorism that Yasir Arafat is now waging wouldn’t have started at all.

Marsha Santelli
Chicago, Ill.

James Fallows is to be commended for taking up the loaded subject of Mohammed al-Dura’s alleged murder by Israeli troops and coming to the courageous conclusion on the basis of in-depth analysis that the boy could not possibly have been killed by Israeli gunfire.

When journalism has become increasingly tainted by the pressures for political correctness, and when journalists have even been intimidated by threats against their person for daring to speak the truth, James Fallows’s willingness to revisit a politically charged subject and *The Atlantic’s* willingness to print the story are refreshing departures from today’s sorry record on Middle East coverage.

Jeanette Goldsmith
Brooklyn, N.Y.

James Fallows includes a puzzling statement: “What is known about the rest of the day is fragmentary and additionally confusing. A report from a nearby hospital says that a dead boy was admitted on September 30, with two gun wounds to the left side of his torso.” But the photo of the father and son crouching behind a concrete barrel against a wall suggests that neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians could possibly have shot the boy in the left side—that was the side against the wall. So the boy admitted to the hospital with two bullet wounds in his left side couldn’t have been Mohammed al-Dura. Eliminating that red herring doesn’t tell us what happened, but it may help to untangle the terrible events of that day.

Dan Littman
Oakland, Calif.

James Fallows replies:

To Cary Groner and others concerned about the dimensions of the barrel, I say that the diagram was indeed schematic rather than exact. We included it for explanatory purposes, to show the possible directions of fire, rather than as evidence in itself. What changed my mind about the incident was watching footage of the shooting replayed dozens of times. It seemed evident from the footage that at the crucial moments, the father and son had sheltered themselves behind the barrel, relative to the IDF position, and that the boy was further sheltered by the father. They were entirely unsheltered from gunfire coming from other directions, including the known location of Palestinian policemen. Since this judgment depends on actually seeing the footage, I recognize that my description of it may not persuade others. I believe that open-minded observers would come to the same conclusion I did.

To Steven Freedman I point out that I did not say that the event was a hoax, and I did not rely on the diagram, but I did explain why the Israeli military wants to drop the entire subject.

My saying that Esther Schapira “collaborated” with Nahum Shahaf may have produced connotations I didn’t intend. Her impressive documentary raises numerous doubts about the conventional view that Israeli soldiers shot the boy.

The general point I tried to convey in this article was how confused, contested, and finally unknowable is the “truth” of the al-Dura case—and how deep are the differences of world view in the Middle East. Read together, the letters printed here, like many others I have received, underscore that point.

Logic of Suicide Terrorism

In “The Logic of Suicide Terrorism” (June *Atlantic*), Bruce Hoffman says that in Israel the terrorists’ strategy has “changed daily behavior patterns—the first step toward crushing morale and breaking the will to resist,” and that “terrorists hope to compel the enemy society’s acquiescence, if not outright surrender, to their demands.” If—as in the IDF chief of staff’s paraphrase—terrorists think that “Israel is a spider-web society: it looks strong from the outside, but touch it and it will fall apart,” and that “al Qaeda ... has made a

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In over 10 years, more than 140 million prescriptions have been filled for the cholesterol-lowering medication ZOCOR. I've been taking ZOCOR ever since I had bypass surgery about 4 years ago. My doctor told me that along with a healthy diet and exercise, ZOCOR could lower my cholesterol, which is what I really needed to do. I've always felt good knowing ZOCOR is a time-tested medication. You should too. And my cholesterol? ZOCOR really got it down.

ZOCOR is an effective medicine that along with diet and exercise can significantly lower total cholesterol. A clinical study among people with high cholesterol and heart disease found 42% fewer deaths from heart attack among those taking ZOCOR.* One tablet, taken once a day, can help people with high cholesterol and heart disease live a longer, healthier life.

Important considerations: ZOCOR is a prescription medicine and isn't right for everyone, including women who are pregnant or pregnant or who may become pregnant, anyone with liver problems, and people who are allergic to any of the ingredients of ZOCOR. Unexplained muscle pain or weakness could be a sign of a rare but serious side effect and should be reported to your doctor right away. Your doctor may do blood tests before and during treatment with ZOCOR to check for liver problems. To avoid serious side effects, discuss with your doctor medicine or food you are taking while on ZOCOR (see details immediately following this ad).

When diet and exercise are not enough, ask your doctor if ZOCOR is right for you. For more information and the free *Guide for Managing High Cholesterol*, call 1-800-MERCK-75 or visit zocor.com.

YOUR RESULTS MAY VARY.

PLEASE READ THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT ZOCOR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THIS AD.

*Based on 111/2,221 (ZOCOR) vs 189/2,223 (placebo).

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USES OF ZOCOR

ZOCOR is a prescription drug that is indicated as an addition to diet for many patients with high cholesterol when diet and exercise are inadequate. For patients with coronary heart disease (CHD) and high cholesterol, ZOCOR is indicated as an addition to diet to reduce the risk of death by reducing coronary death; to reduce the risk of heart attack; to reduce the risk for undergoing cardiac procedures (coronary artery bypass grafting and percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty); and to reduce the risk of stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA).

WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED

Some people should not take ZOCOR. Discuss this with your doctor.

ZOCOR should not be used by patients who are allergic to any of its ingredients. In addition to the active ingredient simvastatin, each tablet contains the following inactive ingredients: cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, iron oxides, talc, titanium dioxide, and starch. Butylated hydroxyanisole is added as a preservative.

Patients with liver problems: ZOCOR should not be used by patients with active liver disease or repeated blood test results indicating possible liver problems. (See WARNINGS.)

Women who are or may become pregnant: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus. **Women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely that they will become pregnant.** If a woman does become pregnant while on ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once.

Women who are breast-feeding should not take ZOCOR.

WARNINGS

Muscle: Tell your doctor right away if you experience any unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness at any time during treatment with ZOCOR so your doctor can decide if ZOCOR should be stopped. Some patients may have muscle pain or weakness while taking ZOCOR. Rarely, this can include muscle breakdown resulting in kidney damage. The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients taking certain other drugs along with ZOCOR:

- Cyclosporine, itraconazole, ketoconazole, erythromycin, clarithromycin, HIV protease inhibitors, the antidepressant nefazodone, or large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily), particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Gemfibrozil, other fibrates, or lipid-lowering doses (≥ 1 g/day) of niacin, particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Amiodarone or verapamil with higher doses of ZOCOR.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater at higher doses of simvastatin.

Because the risk of muscle side effects is greater when ZOCOR is used with the products listed above, the combined use of these products should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits are likely to outweigh the increased risks.

If your doctor determines that the benefits of combined use of ZOCOR with gemfibrozil, other fibrates, or niacin likely outweigh the increased risk of muscle problems, the dose of ZOCOR should not exceed 10 mg daily. No more than 10 mg/day of ZOCOR should be taken with cyclosporine.

The combined use of verapamil or amiodarone with doses above ZOCOR 20 mg should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits outweigh the increased risk of muscle breakdown.

Your doctor should also carefully monitor for any muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly during the initial months of therapy and if the dose of either drug is increased. Your doctor also may monitor the level of certain muscle enzymes in your body, but there is no assurance that such monitoring will prevent the occurrence of severe muscle disease.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients with kidney problems or diabetes.

If you have conditions that can increase your risk of muscle breakdown, which in turn can cause kidney damage, your doctor should temporarily withhold or stop ZOCOR. Also, since there are no known adverse consequences of briefly stopping therapy with ZOCOR, treatment should be stopped a few days before elective major surgery and when any major acute medical or surgical condition occurs. Discuss this with your doctor, who can explain these conditions to you.

Liver: About 1% of patients who took ZOCOR in clinical trials developed elevated levels of some liver enzymes. Patients who had these increases usually had no symptoms. Elevated liver enzymes usually returned to normal levels when therapy with ZOCOR was stopped.

In the ZOCOR Survival Study, the number of patients with more than 1 liver enzyme level elevation to greater than 3 times the normal upper limit was no different between the ZOCOR and placebo groups. Only 8 patients on ZOCOR and 5 on placebo discontinued therapy due to elevated liver enzyme levels. Patients were started on 20 mg of ZOCOR, and one third had their dose raised to 40 mg.

Your doctor should perform routine blood tests to check these enzymes before you start treatment with ZOCOR and periodically thereafter (for example, semiannually) for your first year of treatment or until 1 year after your last elevation in dose. Patients titrated to the 80-mg dose should receive an additional test at 3 months. If your enzyme levels increase, your doctor should order more frequent tests. If your liver enzyme levels remain unusually high, your doctor should discontinue your medication.

Tell your doctor about any liver disease you may have had in the past and about how much alcohol you consume. ZOCOR should be used with caution in patients who consume large amounts of alcohol.

PRECAUTIONS

Before starting treatment with ZOCOR, try to lower your cholesterol by other methods such as diet, exercise, and weight loss. Ask your doctor about how best to do this. Any other medical problems that can cause high cholesterol should also be treated.

Drug Interactions: Because of possible serious drug interactions, it is important to tell your doctor what other drugs you are taking, including those obtained without a prescription. You should also tell other doctors who are prescribing a new medicine for you that you are taking ZOCOR® (simvastatin).

ZOCOR can interact with the following:

- Itraconazole
- Ketoconazole
- Erythromycin
- Clarithromycin
- HIV protease inhibitors
- Nefazodone
- Cyclosporine
- Large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

The risk of myopathy is also increased by the following lipid-lowering drugs that can cause myopathy when given alone:

- Gemfibrozil
- Other fibrates
- Niacin (nicotinic acid) (≥ 1 g/day)

The risk of muscle breakdown is increased with other drugs:

- Amiodarone
- Verapamil

Some patients taking lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR and coumarin anticoagulants (a type of blood thinner) have experienced bleeding and/or increased blood clotting time. Patients taking these medicines should have their blood tested before starting therapy with ZOCOR and should continue to be monitored.

Central Nervous System Toxicity; Cancer, Mutations, Impairment of Fertility: Like most prescription drugs, ZOCOR was required to be tested on animals before it was marketed for human use. Often these tests were designed to achieve higher drug concentrations than humans achieve at recommended dosing. In some tests, the animals had damage to the nerves in the central nervous system. In studies of mice with high doses of ZOCOR, the likelihood of certain types of cancerous tumors increased. No evidence of mutations or of damage to genetic material has been seen. In 1 study with ZOCOR, there was decreased fertility in male rats.

Pregnancy: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus.

Safety in pregnancy has not been established. In studies with lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR, there have been rare reports of birth defects of the skeleton and digestive system. Therefore, women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely they will become pregnant. If a woman does become pregnant while taking ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once. The active ingredient of ZOCOR did not cause birth defects in rats at 3 times the human dose or in rabbits at 3 times the human dose.

Nursing Mothers: Drugs taken by nursing mothers may be present in their breast milk. Because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, a woman taking ZOCOR should not breast-feed. (See WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED.)

Pediatric Use: ZOCOR is not recommended for children or patients under 20 years of age.

Geriatric Use: Higher blood levels of active drug were seen in elderly patients (70–78 years of age) compared with younger patients (18–30 years of age) in 1 study. In other studies, the cholesterol-lowering effects of ZOCOR were at least as great in elderly patients as in younger patients, and there were no overall differences in safety between elderly and younger patients over the 20–80 mg/day dosage range.

SIDE EFFECTS

Most patients tolerate treatment with ZOCOR well; however, like all prescription drugs, ZOCOR can cause side effects, and some of them can be serious. Side effects that do occur are usually mild and short-lived. Only your doctor can weigh the risks versus the benefits of any prescription drug. In clinical studies with ZOCOR, less than 1.5% of patients dropped out of the studies because of side effects. In a large, long-term study, patients taking ZOCOR experienced similar side effects to those patients taking placebo (sugar pills). Some of the side effects that have been reported with ZOCOR or related drugs are listed below. This list is not complete. Be sure to ask your doctor about side effects before taking ZOCOR and to discuss any side effects that occur.

Digestive System: Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, gas, heartburn, stomach pain/cramps, anorexia, loss of appetite, nausea, inflammation of the pancreas, hepatitis, jaundice, fatty changes in the liver, and, rarely, severe liver damage and failure, cirrhosis, and liver cancer.

Muscle, Skeletal: Muscle cramps, aches, pain, and weakness; joint pain; muscle breakdown.

Nervous System: Dizziness, headache, insomnia, tingling, memory loss, damage to nerves causing weakness and/or loss of sensation and/or abnormal sensations, anxiety, depression, tremor, loss of balance, psychomotor disturbances.

Skin: Rash, itching, hair loss, dryness, nodules, discoloration.

Eye/Senses: Blurred vision, altered taste sensation, progression of cataracts, eye muscle weakness.

Hypersensitivity (Allergic) Reactions: On rare occasions, a wide variety of symptoms have been reported to occur either alone or together in groups (referred to as a syndrome) that appeared to be based on allergic-type reactions, which may rarely be fatal. These have included 1 or more of the following: a severe generalized reaction that may include shortness of breath, wheezing, digestive symptoms, and low blood pressure and even shock; an allergic reaction with swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat with difficulty swallowing or breathing; symptoms mimicking lupus (a disorder in which a person's immune system may attack parts of his or her own body); severe muscle and blood vessel inflammation, sometimes including rash; bruises; various disorders of blood cells (that could result in anemia, infection, or blood clotting problems) or abnormal blood tests; inflamed or painful joints; hives; fatigue and weakness; sensitivity to sunlight; fever, chills; flushing; difficulty breathing; and severe skin disorders that vary from rash to a serious burn-like shedding of skin all over the body, including mucous membranes such as the lining of the mouth.

Other: Loss of sexual desire, breast enlargement, impotence.

Laboratory Tests: Liver function test abnormalities including elevated alkaline phosphatase and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities.

NOTE: This summary provides important information about ZOCOR. If you would like more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the prescribing information and then discuss it with them.



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similar assessment of America's vulnerability," they are overlooking some very large mistakes in logic.

Israel was formed out of the ashes of the Holocaust. No Israeli will "fall apart" when threatened, any more than any American air traveler will give up a plane when faced with a terrorist's box cutter. Israelis know that Hamas will not stop until there is no longer an Israel. Like the passengers of Flight 93, who crashed into the field on 9/11, Israelis will not give up their lives in fear and military weakness, as did millions of Jews in concentration camps.

As for America, al Qaeda should remember that Americans most emphatically did not acquiesce when struck by Japan at Pearl Harbor. Afterward Yamamoto felt that Tokyo had "awakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve."

There is no historical basis for or logic in assuming that either Israel or America will be made to fall apart by attack after fearful attack. Terrorist organizations convince their followers and supporters

with these thoughts, but never their enemies. They can only hope to gain local power and notoriety—but there is no future, and therefore no logic, in it.

*Ed Goldberg
Dix Hills, N.Y.*

Bruce Hoffman missed two obvious actions that the United States can take to reduce the risks of this kind of terrorism on our soil. First, border security and an immigration policy developed from a national-security perspective would surely reduce our exposure to terrorism of all kinds. Second, Hoffman urges that we learn from the Israeli experience, but he overlooks a key reason for Israel's ability to stop suicide bombers before they reach their targets: armed Israeli citizens. Numerous cases have been documented in which an armed citizen, not a police officer or a soldier, has stopped a terrorist moments before an act of terrorism. Much of the United States still has laws that criminalize the citizen who bears arms—the very person who can help provide us with

some real security. Those states that currently allow citizens to carry concealed firearms have lower crime rates than do states that restrict this activity; concealed-carry laws could significantly augment our society's ability to cope with suicide bombers and other terrorists.

*David Howard
Rockford, Ill.*

The pivotal event in *The Aeneid*, the settling of Rome by Trojan exiles, requires the removal of a population that already lives there. Nearly every ethnic group in today's world has gained its territory through violent theft, with tactics including varying degrees of extermination, expulsion, and absorption, though conquered peoples sometimes serve as an underclass for cheap labor. Virgil glorified this sordid tale as a divinely sanctioned precursor of Manifest Destiny, and modern school textbooks perform similar feats of historical sanitization.

Israel's expropriation of the West Bank and Gaza differs only in that it is happening now (a map depicting Israeli

July 18, 2006

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"settlements" looks like a terminal case of measles), although no one could tell that from reading Bruce Hoffman's "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism." Hoffman addresses the strategic aims of suicide bombers and the effect on their victims, but never the circumstances that drive Palestinians to such suicidal despair. To do so would point to official Israeli policies: thirty-five years of military occupation, tens of thousands of fruit-bearing trees destroyed, thousands of homes bulldozed, businesses wrecked, land confiscated and "settled" by hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens. Hoffman won't go there.

He is no more dishonest than the rest of us, if that is a comfort.

Felix Braendel
San Rafael, Calif.

As a diagnostic radiologist, I would like to point out that the picture on the cover of the June *Atlantic* (a survivor of a nail-bomb suicide attack) is not an x-ray. The image was created by x-rays: electromagnetic radiation beams whose soft-tissue attenuation is recorded on film or a monitor. The image itself is termed a radiograph.

E. B. Schmidt, M.D.
Grosse Point Farms, Mich.

JFK's Second Term

The extract from Robert Dallek's *An Unfinished Life*—"JFK's Second Term" (June *Atlantic*)—was both surprising and disappointing. Dallek appropriately depicts President John F. Kennedy's distrust of the advice provided to him by the military and the CIA, especially in light of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and implies that Kennedy would have pulled us completely out of Vietnam during a second administration. So far, so good. But the situation was vastly more serious and consequential than Dallek recognizes, leaving his historical record a pale imitation of a grim historical reality.

The CIA, for example, had grievously misled JFK about the prospects for success in Cuba, suggesting that a general uprising would occur when the invasion forces landed, and that if for any reason the invasion was not a success, these

forces would disappear into the mountains to conduct guerrilla warfare. But there was no serious prospect of a general uprising against a popular leader, and the soldiers were not trained to conduct guerrilla warfare. They were even put ashore in a swamp, where Cuban forces quickly prevailed.

More important, Dallek also neglects to observe that the CIA had learned that the Soviets knew the date of the invasion—information that the Agency did not provide to the Commander in Chief. This was an act of treason, if any acts are treasonous—something Dallek should have known, since it was revealed by the CIA and even reported in *The Washington Post* (April 29, 2000).

Furthermore, those familiar with James Bamford's *Body of Secrets* understand that the Joint Chiefs had been asked by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to fabricate reasons for attacking Cuba if they could not find real ones. Lyman Lemnitzer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, had taken this to heart and, in collaboration with Edward Lansdale, among others, was advancing a variety of fantastic schemes intended to implicate Castro in acts of sabotage and carnage that were American in origin but designed to inflame American opinion against Cuba.

As Bamford explains, the Joint Chiefs became increasingly frustrated with JFK's unwillingness to embrace these harebrained schemes, which included bombings, false arrests, and even hijackings. One scheme was to load a civilian airliner with college students and have it fly over Cuba in order to shoot it down and then blame Castro. This was supposed to be an elaborate deception, in which the students would secretly be off-loaded before the plane was downed, but it would have been embarrassing for any of them to have turned up alive.

The Joint Chiefs tended to regard JFK as the major obstacle in the fight against international communism, for at least three reasons: he had not invaded Cuba when they unanimously recommended that he do so; he had signed an aboveground-test-ban treaty with the Soviet Union, against their unanimous opposition; and he was ini-

tiating the withdrawal of U.S. advisers from Vietnam, where the Joint Chiefs believed a stand had to be taken.

*James H. Fetzer
University of Minnesota
Duluth, Minn.*

Robert Dallek contends that President Kennedy would have pulled out of Vietnam after the 1964 election. In arriving at this conclusion he accepts at face value the testimony of leading figures in Kennedy's Administration who recalled JFK's opposition to the war only in 1968. Such testimony is suspect, since these advisers kept silent while the crucial decisions were being made. One need not accuse them of deliberately lying. Most likely they, too, were guilty of wishful thinking and, as the war turned sour, gave greater credence to passing remarks than such remarks deserve.

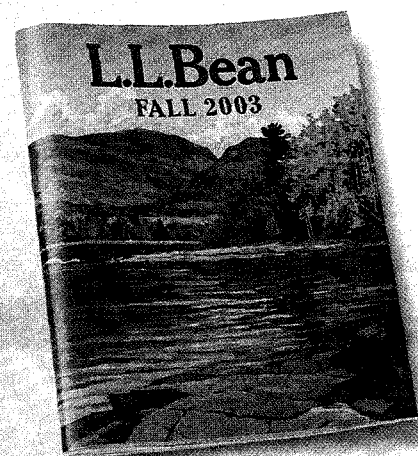
Practical considerations also weigh against such testimony. To suggest that JFK would mislead the public and allow U.S. servicemen to sacrifice their lives to ease his re-election is to attribute a monstrousness to his character that even most of his critics don't ascribe to him. If Kennedy had doubts about Vietnam, he would have confided in his brother—yet Bobby tried to get appointed ambassador to South Vietnam in 1964, which would have lashed the Kennedy name to the fate of Saigon. Dallek also has to ignore a substantial body of evidence that the Kennedy Administration sponsored the coup against Ngo Dinh Diem, not because the Ngo family was harassing Buddhists but because it went behind the back of the United States to seek peace with Ho Chi Minh. If JFK was planning to abandon South Vietnam in a year, it is highly unlikely that Diem's initiative to seek a separate peace with the North would have inspired the Americans to support a coup. It would have been the easiest way out.

Whatever flexibility JFK had was lost on October 31, 1963, with the murder of the Ngos. The collapse of South Vietnam into gross instability began in 1964, with the political vacuum caused by the coup. It was no secret that the United States was behind the coup. It slanders President Kennedy to suggest that he would have been so irresponsible

and politically naive as to destabilize an ally and then walk away from it. To do so would have created a new McCarthyism domestically and new alliances with Moscow throughout the Third World. America and the Kennedy Administration would have lost all credibility. We had no alternative to the course we took after the coup. Sponsoring the coup was a gamble that failed. Fifty-eight thousand Americans died for the sins of the Kennedy Administration, and no amount of wishful thinking can change that.

JFK's tactics were consistent in all his Cold War crises. He did not shy away from confrontation, nor did he authorize the most aggressive response. He always chose a middle way. Sometimes this approach failed, as in the Bay of Pigs (authorizing the invasion but withholding air cover). Sometimes it succeeded, as in the Cuban Missile Crisis (rejecting bombing but ordering a blockade). Sometimes it just bought time, as with Laos (allowing Laos to be neutralized, but beefing up the commitment to South Vietnam). Sometimes it was merely pointless, as in the construction of the Berlin Wall (ordering battle-ready troops lined up to observe the construction of the wall without taking any action). Vietnam would have been no different. Kennedy would have rejected the military's demands for a call-up of the reserves, the invasion of North Vietnam, and unrestricted bombing. He would have pursued a limited bombing campaign in the North and a limited buildup of troops in South Vietnam—say, a few battalions of Marines to guard the airfields at first, and later, as conditions deteriorated, 75,000 men, then 125,000, and so on. In other words, President Kennedy's instincts would have led him along the same route that Lyndon Johnson took.

But that doesn't mean that the outcome would have been the same. Instead of trying to pound the square peg of withdrawal into the round hole of Kennedy's Vietnam legacy, JFK's apologists should consider the real man, not the idealized one. There is a much more likely and successful course the war might have taken had JFK survived. From his experiences in World War II, he had come to admire the Marine Corps, which even then was in the



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process of becoming the most tactically innovative of the armed services. JFK, who pushed the development of the Green Berets, was also enamored of special operations. One of the most successful approaches to the war was the embedding of small units of Marines into villages, where they prevented the Vietcong from terrorizing the villagers. This tactic was sadly neglected and eventually abandoned. It might not have been ignored by JFK, who had a keener interest in military affairs than LBJ ever did. Another policy change that might have worked was the Vietnamization of the war. General Creighton Abrams worked wonders with the South Vietnamese army, but by 1969 it was too late. President Kennedy might have begun the process earlier. He always insisted that the war was South Vietnam's to win, and he, for one, rarely engaged in wishful thinking.

*Thomas F. Berner
Yonkers, N.Y.*

I agree that JFK would have made bold policy changes during his second term; but they would have been in the Middle East region. In 1961–1962 Kennedy was working diligently and quietly to defuse the explosive situation in the region by putting forth a plan to allow free Palestinian emigration to Jerusalem and the Arab countries. However, the plan was not favored by the Israelis. Kennedy had little to gain by ratcheting up the pressure on Jerusalem before 1964. He had so much on his plate at that time, he probably decided to wait until after his re-election.

What Kennedy thought could not wait, however, was preventing Israel from obtaining nuclear weapons. U.S. intelligence analysis had concluded that an Israeli bomb would seriously damage the U.S. position in the Arab world. Israel began constructing a nuclear reactor in the Negev Desert in the late 1950s. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion claimed that the Dimona plant was a peaceful textile factory but said, "It is not impossible for scientists in Israel to do for their own people what Einstein and Oppenheimer had done for the U.S."

In 1962 Ben-Gurion assured Kennedy that there were no nuclear weapons

in Israel, and that the Israelis would never be the first to introduce them in the region. He then asked Kennedy to provide Israel with the latest Hawk anti-aircraft missiles as a response to Soviet SAM missiles in Egypt. Kennedy agreed to provide the missiles in exchange for a promise to grant America the right to regular inspections of the Dimona plant to make sure it was used for peaceful means. In October of 1963 he was furious with Israel after the CIA reported to him that the Israelis were failing to live up to their part of the bargain by not allowing enough inspections.

Kennedy may not have known at this time that in 1960 the Israelis had somehow procured more than 300 pounds of enriched bomb-grade uranium from the Nuclear Materials and Equipment Corporation, in Apollo, Pennsylvania. (Apparently the CIA knew of this and covered it up.) This would mean that Israel was at least close to having nuclear weapons in 1963. By the end of 1969 the Nixon Administration had estimated that Israel then had from twelve to sixteen nuclear weapons. When Henry Kissinger was told of this, his response was "So what?"

*James E. Doyle
Edina, Minn.*

The excerpt from Robert Dallek's recent work on John F. Kennedy contains one statement that warrants correction: that the Green Berets were created in 1961. In fact the Green Berets—or, more precisely, the Special Forces—were created ten years earlier.

The passage of the Lodge Act, in early 1951, underlined the need for a more formalized unconventional-warfare resource, and responsibility for developing this resource was assigned to the Special Operations Division of the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare. The action officer was Colonel Aaron Bank, and I, a recently activated reserve officer, acted as his assistant. We were both veterans of operations with the Office of Strategic Services during World War II—he in Europe and I in the Far East.

We completed the staff study to create the Special Forces, as they would come to be known, and it was formally approved by then Army Chief of Staff

General J. Lawton Collins in late April or early May. The first concrete step was participation by a small number of Special Forces officers in a multi-divisional exercise at Fort Bragg in midsummer of that year.

At that maneuver some wanted a special identification for the Special Forces personnel, and someone fished out an old green beret that he had worn when operating with British commandos in World War II. It was immediately, and totally informally, adopted.

The green beret became a symbol and was widely used until 1953, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had always detested anything that smacked of elite units and special uniforms, abolished the wearing of the green beret. Of course it continued to be worn here and there, but always surreptitiously.

After Kennedy became President, he was taken to visit the Special Forces headquarters at Fort Bragg and was, of course, immersed in the legend of the green beret. Immediately grasping its morale-building power, he ordered the beret approved as the standard headgear for the Special Forces.

So he became, to a great extent, a sort of spiritual father of the Special Forces, and they, in turn, became informally "the Green Berets." But he did not create them.

*Byron S. Martin
Flagstaff, Ariz.*

Robert Dallek replies:

James Fetzer and Thomas Berner complain that I did not discuss a number of significant points about Cuba and Vietnam in my 4,000-word article. Most of these are addressed in my book, including the question of whether Kennedy would have allowed American troops to die in Vietnam for personal political gain. James Doyle's assumption that Kennedy would have taken bold initiatives in the Middle East in a second term may be correct, but Cuba, U.S.-Soviet relations, limits on nuclear proliferation, and Vietnam would have come first. As for the comments of Byron Martin on the Green Berets, he accurately describes their origins, but it was Kennedy who made them into a publicly recognizable force in the battle against communist insurgencies.

Hitler's Library

I thoroughly enjoyed "Hitler's Forgotten Library," by Timothy W. Ryback (*May Atlantic*). It answered several questions I'd had about Hitler's thinking, particularly about his interest in mysticism and the occult. Ryback shows clearly that when looking at the larger questions, a historical scholar or biographer ought to take into account what may at first glance appear to be insignificant. A jot here, a scribble there, tells a lot about Hitler, his anti-Semitism, his hatred of Christianity, and his delusions about ruling the world. Plainly, from the evidence Ryback cites, the seeds of Hitler's disdain for human life were planted prior to his political rise, developing later into a raging inhumanity and culminating in a loathing for the very nation and people he claimed to love. Hitler willingly harbored his prejudices, fueling them with his malice. They became, in the end, larger than the man and less selective. Ryback's article is a sobering reminder of what happens when we change the words of God to fit our own designs and selfish ambitions. They have never been "body, mind, and soul," as Maximilian Riedel argued, but always "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." A fine article, equal to Elias Canetti's essay "Hitler According to Speer."

Greg Simpson
Boring, Ore.

Timothy Ryback, perusing Hitler's copy of *Worte Christi* (*Words of Christ*), notes a "brief penciled line" in the margin, "the only mark in the entire book," next to the passage "You should love God, your Lord, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your spirit: this is the foremost and greatest commandment. Another is equally important: Love your neighbor as you would love yourself." Ryback remarks, "Given Hitler's legendary disdain for organized religion in general and Christianity in particular, I didn't expect him to have devoted much time to the teachings of Christ, let alone to have marked this quintessential Christian virtue."

Ryback has here fallen victim to an all too common misperception among

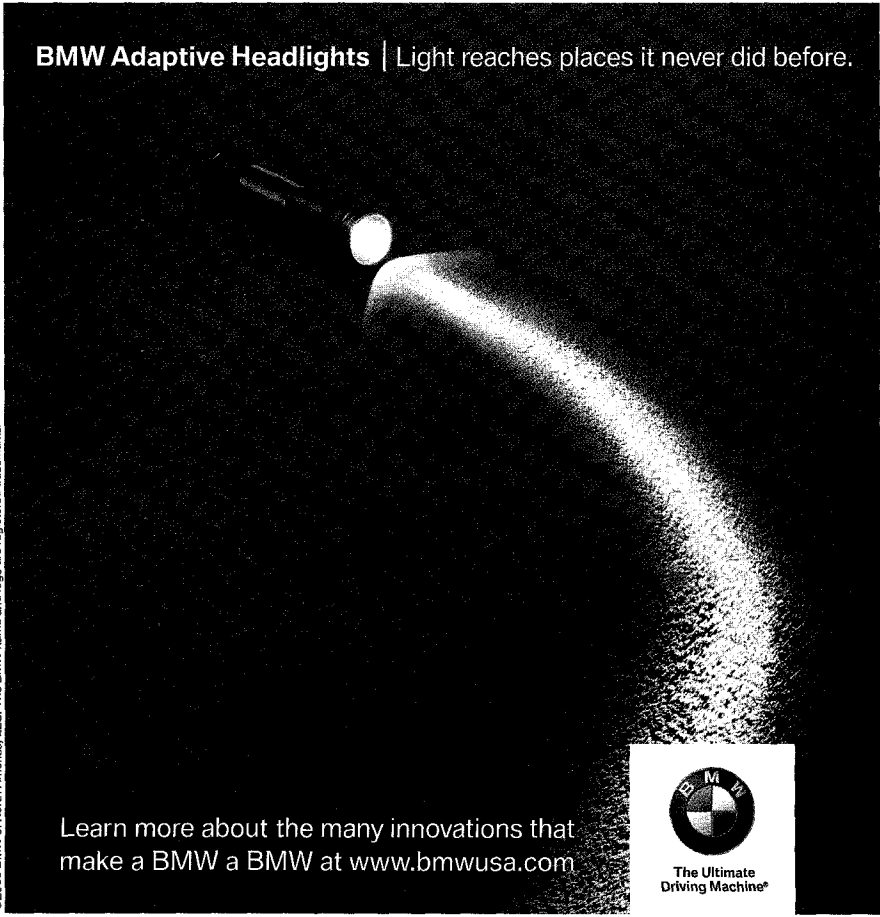
Christians, and in so doing has missed an even greater irony in Hitler's singling out of this passage. These words, attributed to Jesus in Matthew 22:37-39 (and, similarly, in Mark 12:30-31 and Luke 10:27), do not in fact originate with Jesus; he is merely quoting, to his Jewish listeners, two familiar verses of the Torah. Asked by a questioner to name the greatest of the Torah's 613 *mitzvot* (commandments), Jesus replies first by citing Deuteronomy 6:5—a passage instantly recognizable to observant Jews as the *Ve-Ahavta* (Hebrew for "you shall love"), which is recited in every Jewish prayer service immediately after the *Sh'ma*, the central profession of monotheistic faith ("Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one"). (Indeed, in Luke's version, Jesus quotes the *Sh'ma* itself in the preceding verse, 10:26.) He then goes on to cite Leviticus 19:18, "*Ve-ahavta le-rei'akha kamokha*" ("You shall love your neighbor as yourself"). It is Jesus' instant and encyclopedic familiarity with the text of the Torah that allows him to draw together these two separate verses, linked by the com-

mon word *ve-ahavta*, to make the point that they represent the same teaching: that love of God is inseparable from love of one's fellow human beings.

Christian readers who focus exclusively on the New Testament are often unaware of the earlier, Jewish origins of many of Jesus' sayings. (Another familiar example is "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," ascribed to Jesus in Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4, but quoted there from Deuteronomy 8:3.) That Hitler should have singled out this quintessentially Jewish passage for special emphasis is a delicious irony indeed.

Stephen Chermicoff
Berkeley, Calif.

Timothy Ryback is so committed to the false stereotype of Hitler as an atheist that he does not know how to respond to the evidence he found in Hitler's library of a spiritual quest. Born a Roman Catholic, Hitler was never excommunicated, his *Mein Kampf* never placed on the Vatican's Index of forbid-



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den works. Wehrmacht soldiers wore "Gott mit uns" ("God with us") on their belt buckles. In *Mein Kampf* and in a 1938 Reichstag speech, Hitler declared, "I am convinced that I am acting as the agent of our Creator. By fighting off Jews, I am doing the Lord's work." The historian John Toland amplified the same point, writing, "Still a member in good standing of the Church of Rome despite the detestation of its hierarchy, [Hitler] carried within him its teaching that the Jews were the killers of God."

In 1941 Hitler told General Gerhart Engel, "I am now as before a Catholic and will always remain so." Granted, Hitler's Catholicism can be questioned, given the Reich's clumsy efforts to replace Christian worship with a sort of Wagnerian *volk* cult. But that is evidence of paganism, not of atheism.

No matter how convenient it may be to situate Hitler on the historical shelf next to Stalin, it is false and misleading to brand him an atheist. Neither Hitler nor his Reich can be fully understood apart from the influence of centuries of anti-Semitism based on the charge oficide, then a central part of both Catholic and Lutheran dogma. Far from exemplifying the fruits of atheism, Hitler shows us the horror of which mid-twentieth-century European Christian doctrine was capable when driven beyond its limits.

Thomas Flynn
Amherst, N.Y.

Timothy Ryback did not fully capture the religious nature of Adolf Hitler's world view, and its Christian connections. Although Catholicism and Protestantism considered all peoples savable by Jesus Christ's grace, they were virulently anti-Semitic—Luther wrote the predecessor for *Mein Kampf*, the execrable "On the Jews and Their Lies." Raised in a Catholic household, and an admirer of the aura and authority of the clergy, Hitler in his teens and twenties evolved into an Aryan *volk* Christian. This creed views Jesus as a militant Aryan sent to earth to wage war against the Jews he assaulted in the Temple. Only Aryans are the divine spiritual descendants of Adam and Eve; others are soulless entities, either developed from apes and best suited for

slavery or the spawn of Satan and to be eliminated. Christian Identity and similar modern sects hold similar views, blacks being labeled "mud people." The youthful Hitler was strongly influenced by the *volkish* pre-World War I Christian Social Party. He publicly proclaimed, "My feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter," and boasted, "We have therefore undertaken the fight against the atheistic movement, and that not merely with a few theoretical declarations, we have stamped it out."

By no means a churchgoer, Hitler made many references to God and Providence in his speeches, writings, and private conversations, and he was fond of paraphrasing the Bible. He preferred that his Luftwaffe aircraft sport crosses on the wings and fuselage, swastikas being limited to the tail. His architect Albert Speer recounted that Hitler insisted on the presence of churches in the future Berlin. Hitler thought that only a higher power could explain his survival in World War I and his amazing successes, and as events turned against him, he felt that God would save him and his Reich if German soldiers continued to have faith in the divine cause. Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Hitler's last attempt to reverse his fortunes, know the first code name he gave to the grand offensive: Christose.

The Nazis both supported and harassed what they considered Judaism-contaminated Christian churches, which also challenged Hitler's ultimate authority and his dream of unifying all German Aryans. A favorite tactic was to accuse priests of pedophilia. Hitler eliminated most members of the Polish Catholic clergy—after all, they were not Aryans. He planned to eliminate the competition and make all Germans into Aryan *volk* Christians after his final victory. Whether this would have worked is doubtful.

Yet members of the Protestant and Catholic clergy and laity cooperated to make Hitler a dictator who long enjoyed majority support. Democracy was despised by many Christians, but Hitler also bought them off by decreeing that almost 10 percent of income taxes go to the churches—about \$2 billion to the evangelicals and \$1 billion to the Vati-

can. In exchange the Catholic Church agreed to support the notorious Enabling Act and require German bishops to swear loyalty to the new Reich. So Pius XII—even after his Polish clergy had been liquidated—condemned attempts to kill Hitler, and yearly directed that birthday greetings be sent stating, "Warmest congratulations to the Führer in the name of the bishops and the dioceses in Germany with fervent prayers which the Catholics of Germany are sending to heaven on their altars." The Pope would occasionally protest and even plot against Hitler, but never turned down his money. Nor would Protestant powers.

That many historians continue to downplay the connection between Hitler and religion reflects the continuing desire of a theologically correct culture to suppress knowledge of faith's involvement in the largest bribery and corruption scandal in history, and its corresponding failure to abort the greatest tragedy of all time.

Gregory Paul
Baltimore, Md.

I cannot see one good reason why Hitler's library should be in the United States, either at the Library of Congress or at Brown University. It is an absolute scandal. This unique collection should be returned, with an apology for looting, to the German government as soon as possible.

Gregory Lauder-Frost
London, England

Timothy W. Ryback replies:

In regard to my labeling Jesus' words in Matthew 22:37-39 as articulating a distinctly Christian virtue, I am grateful to Stephen Chernicoff for the correction, and should have known better, not only from my reading of the Bible but also from my reading of Bolshevism: From Moses to Lenin. In this bizarre anti-Semitic screed, which allegedly presents a "conversation" between Hitler and his mentor Dietrich Eckart, Hitler addresses Luther's translation of this very passage: "Luther translated a certain word, for example, as 'racial kinsman,' but then the rabbi came in and said that the word means 'neighbor.' And so we have the translation: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself' rather than, as it should be, 'Love thy

racial kinsman as thyself." A small piece of cunning, but—it served its purpose of giving the Jews the aspect of real humanitarians." Even if Hitler did not actually say this (and there is no concrete evidence that he did other than Eckart's account; most scholars doubt that he did), I certainly read Eckart and should have remembered.

I did not intend to cast Hitler as an atheist, as Thomas Flynn suggests, nor did I wish to obfuscate Hitler's personal links to the Christian faith. As mentioned in the article, Hitler was an apostate, not an atheist, and disdained organized religion in general. For all his public posturing in regard to the Catholic Church (so compellingly illustrated by Gregory Paul), in his "table talk" conversations Hitler frequently expressed his contempt for Christianity, and on one occasion, in July of 1941, he spoke of his intention to eventually place the Christian churches on the path to extinction.

In the summer of 2001, while researching my article for The Atlantic, I interviewed Traudl Junge, Hitler's private secretary, who worked with him on an almost daily basis during the last two years of the war. She lunched with Hitler and Eva Braun on the afternoon of their suicide. When I asked Junge if she thought, based on her sustained contact with Hitler, that he believed in God, she chastised me: How can any of us know what another person really believes or does not believe? Like Junge, I do think that Hitler believed in some form of "higher power." Like her, I would not claim to know this definitively.

Gregory Lauder-Frost is not alone in wanting the Hitler books back in Germany. In the mid-1950s the Bavarian state asked the German federal government to seek restitution of the Hitler Library, claiming it as "an important source for the understanding of Hitler's personality." Heinz Krekeler, the German ambassador in Washington at that time, informally inquired at the State Department, and ultimately recommended against a restitution request. "In connection with the resulting difficulties we can expect from the Congress," Krekeler warned Bonn in February of 1957, "it is certain that the American press will learn of this matter and will take this up in a way that will be unpleasant for us." Scandalous as it may seem to Mr. Lauder-Frost that the Library of Congress still has Hitler's books, I suspect that a German ambassador advising his government today would write virtually the identical sentence.

Paying Teachers

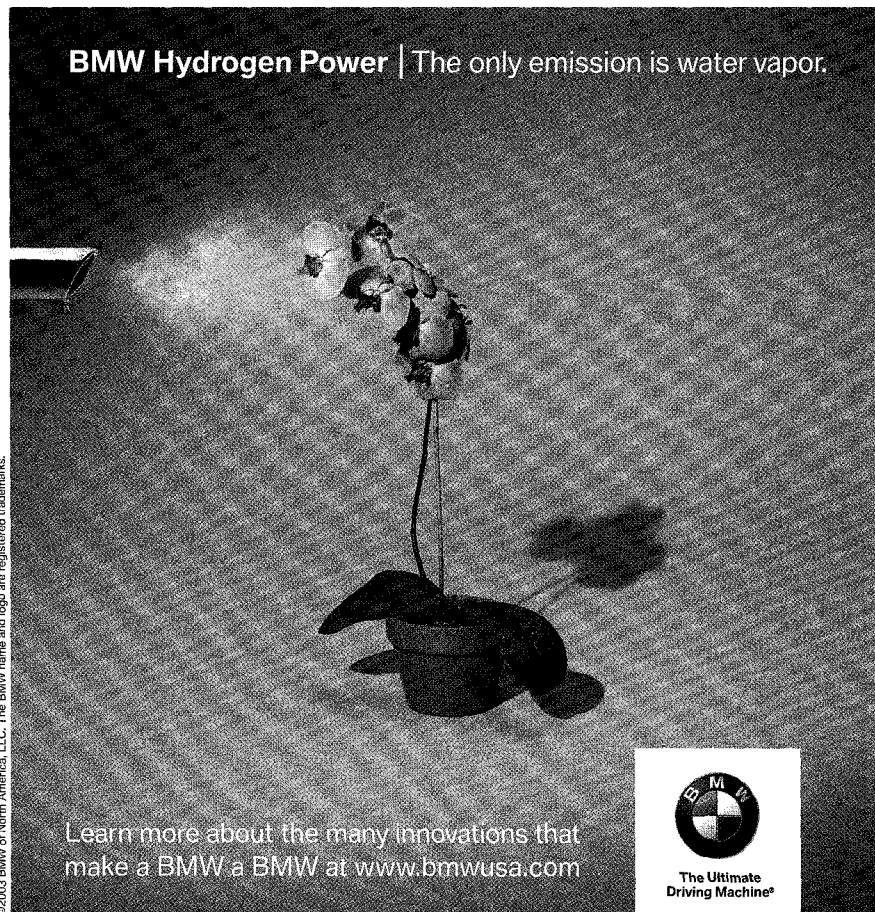
Matthew Miller's proposal to fix failing schools ("A New Deal for Teachers," July/August *Atlantic*) reads like a page out of a business-school textbook. It's extraordinarily seductive in principle but fatally flawed in practice. If teachers are to be evaluated on the basis of the improvement they've made in their students, whether in the form of test scores, attendance records, or graduation rates, they'll resist working in the tough schools with hard-to-teach students. They may be new to the profession, but they're not naive. They know that too many students in the inner-city schools that Miller aims to revitalize go to class with huge deficits in motivation, socialization, and intellectual development. Before teachers can begin to teach subject matter, they have to address these other, nonacademic matters. It's educational triage, and it's practiced on a daily basis in schools serving disproportionate numbers of poor and minority students.

The fact is that to a large extent the success of teachers is determined by the

students who walk through the classroom door. If teachers happen to inherit a class of Talmudic scholars, they're going to shine. Conversely, if they happen to get a class with future felons, they're likely to stumble. In either case, teacher effectiveness will be mismeasured. Unfortunately, the business model that undergirds Miller's plan will do little to reach those students most in need.

Walt Gardner
Los Angeles, Calif.

As tantalizing as the pay increases mentioned in Matthew Miller's article are, and as much as I, a K-12 music specialist with the Saint Paul Public Schools, could use the money, such pay increases seem unlikely. For one thing, they would induce private school teachers to quit their jobs in droves to join the public schools. Private school teachers already earn less than public school teachers, in exchange for more respect and easier jobs. The higher salaries that would become necessary to compete would make many private schools go belly-up. Since many private



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schools exist for a particular agenda (religious or social, for example), those who support such agendas would not be likely to let this happen. Miller is also suggesting that classroom teachers should earn more money than college professors or even their own principals. Thus the “grunts” would earn more than their leaders. Since American public school teachers have traditionally never been in charge of their profession, this seems unlikely too. Furthermore, it does not seem to follow that a chemistry teacher must automatically earn more money than a gym teacher, especially if “better-performing teachers should make more.” It seems just as likely that a gym teacher gave up a semi-pro career to teach. This raises the question of how one compares a gym teacher or an arts teacher with a science teacher or a kindergarten teacher. What about reading teachers, special-education teachers, or gifted-and-talented teachers? Perhaps a better way to help the public schools is simply to give bonus “danger” pay to all those willing to teach in troubled schools.

Philip Fried
Saint Paul, Minn.

Matthew Miller’s plan to infuse the urban public school ranks with better teaching talent can do only good, and for that reason alone ought to be implemented. Nonetheless, its prospects for broad and enduring success are limited by a factor that Miller does not address.

The real reason that top-flight talent is so scarce in urban K–12 classrooms is not primarily a question of compensation. Instead it is this: few of those with the right stuff, intellectual and spiritual, want to spend a career in rooms filled with captive audiences of children, many from educationally indifferent homes. And fewer still want to do so while laboring beneath a stultifying and often unimaginative bureaucracy. Sharp-witted, ambitious adults generally prefer to spend their working hours with people of a similar ilk, not with other people’s children.

Urban K–12 teaching may be challenging, difficult, and exhausting, but “intellectually stimulating” it is not. I can’t imagine that many bright-eyed college seniors contemplating medicine, law, engineering, finance, academia, or, for that

matter, journalism would bypass those professions in favor of the urban public schools, even if salaries were made equivalent and a merit system were put in place.

Stanley Neustadter
New York, N.Y.

Matthew Miller replies:

I address the concerns raised here in the much fuller discussion of the teacher proposal that appears in my new book, The Two Percent Solution: Fixing America’s Problems in Ways Liberals and Conservatives Can Love. Walt Gardner seems to think that disadvantaged students don’t have the same ability to improve over time that students from wealthier and more supportive families do—a point of view rejected by good teachers and superintendents I’ve spoken with. These students may, however, begin at lower levels of achievement, which helps explain why I call for a blended assessment of teachers that—in addition to test-based measures of the improvement made by students over a year—includes peer evaluations of teachers’ classroom practice. Such blended assessments, which are being piloted in promising models across the country, would alleviate concerns about creating incentives for teachers to work with the toughest schools and children. These models (among them the Teacher Advancement Program, developed by the Milken Family Foundation) are being crafted in close collaboration with teachers themselves, to assure their support, in stark contrast to Mr. Gardner’s charge that I am offering only a “seductive” “business-school textbook” approach.

Philip Fried is right that my new deal for teachers would alter the dynamics in local labor markets for teachers—but not, I think, in the way he stresses. The highly elite private schools have such attractive working environments and amenities that they would continue to attract high-quality teachers. The larger number of religious schools that account for most private schooling have a spiritual component that explains why they attract quality teachers despite the prevailing lower salaries. The real impact might be felt in suburban public schools, which might have to raise salaries to compete with the urban and rural salaries that would exist under my plan. Since suburbs typically enjoy higher per-pupil spending than poorer urban neighborhoods, they would be making this choice from a position of financial advantage.

Finally, Stanley Neustadter and I may

simply disagree about the likelihood that many more top-caliber college graduates would choose teaching as a career if the salaries, especially for excellent performers, were higher. Some surveys support my view. Why shouldn’t America get serious with a plan like mine and find out?

Hydrogen Power

Ricardo Bayon replies in the May Letters to the Editor to readers commenting on his article “The Fuel Subsidy We Need” (January/February *Atlantic*), wherein he supported a move to a hydrogen economy in the United States. The readers noted that if wind, solar, and other energy sources were economic alternatives, we would be seeing their development, and that a policy debate on energy merits a sound and complete analysis. In response, Bayon persists in offering only hopes and unsupported assertions. He states, “Wind and solar technologies are growing at breakneck speed. And wind energy in some places is already cost-competitive with natural gas.” What are the significant improvements in these technologies? I have not seen any such improvements in twenty-five years. Although some modest cost reductions have been realized, these are not sufficient to yield any significant investments.

We will not “save” our way out of oil imports, and it is fantasy to presume that we can economically derive the equivalent of millions of barrels of oil from solar and wind sources. We will need more nuclear power and more domestic oil development as well. Development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge may be the only significant and currently economical step to cut into our oil-import bill. Such development will have an impact on about three or four square miles.

Robert Baker
Darien, Conn.

Ricardo Bayon, and the letter writers Hugo Madden and Lawrence Schoen, never quite get to the point. Hydrogen fuel cells can’t solve any energy problems, because they use too much energy. The production, distribution, and storage of hydrogen as a transportation fuel does not make sense in terms of

either energy or economics. The fuel-cell bandwagon owes more to politics, speculation, and corporate spin than to any technological breakthrough. The "hydrogen economy" wears no clothes.

A fuel-cell car running on hydrogen converted from natural gas would use the same amount of energy per mile as an efficient combustion-engine vehicle burning the natural gas directly. The emissions would be about the same, and the fuel-cell vehicle would have less range and higher fuel costs. The fuel-cell car would use 60 percent more energy per mile than a battery-electric vehicle using electricity generated from natural gas.

If, instead, the fuel-cell car ran on hydrogen separated from water by electricity, the fuel-cell car would use four times as much energy per mile as a battery-electric car charged with the same electricity. Or, to put it another way, a renewable energy resource capable of supporting 10,000 fuel-cell cars could instead support 10,000 battery-electric cars and have 75 percent of its clean energy output still available to displace fossil-fuel-based electricity generation.

Critics suggest that battery-electric cars don't have enough range, take too long to charge, and cost too much. But for local use battery-electrics already have more than enough range, and they are typically recharged at home overnight. Their costs are dropping as battery technology advances dramatically. By comparison, some fuel-cell cars may have more range but not enough to take long trips, so they, too, are limited to local use. They can't be refueled conveniently, because the hydrogen refueling infrastructure has not even been planned, let alone funded or built. Fuel-cell cars, at \$1 million each today, are, based on price alone, decades away from commercialization.

We do critically need to substitute electricity for oil as a transportation fuel, but not with hydrogen-powered fuel-cell cars. Battery-electric cars are a better choice. They can be commercialized immediately using existing energy infrastructure, and they are much more efficient than fuel-cell cars. The fuel subsidy we need is one that builds a market for battery-electric cars.

*Tom Gage
Sunnyvale, Calif.*

Grass-Fed Beef

"Back to Grass," Corby Kummer's valuable essay in the May *Atlantic*, contains an ironic error. He deplores the force-feeding of geese with corn to produce foie gras but states, "At least geese are designed to eat corn." In fact grass is the natural diet of geese. The goose—alone among domestic poultry—has a gut structured to extract a living from grass; it is herbivorous.

*Joann S. Grohman
Dixfield, Maine*

In an otherwise delightful article touting the culinary potential of organically grown grass-fed beef, Corby Kummer makes a conspicuous statement in describing consumers who have decided to go organic, "a choice always to be applauded, for the benefits that chemical-free farming brings to the environment."

Of course this sweeping generalization is debatable. Responsible chemical use in modern agricultural production substantially increases per-

acre production; as a result, fewer acres of land are needed to generate an increasing amount of food. Using fewer acres to provide an adequate food supply is an environmental benefit.

This benefit may or may not outweigh the costs of chemical use. Consumers who elect to buy organic products can always be applauded for paying higher prices for their food, but not necessarily for bringing substantial and meaningful benefits to the environment.

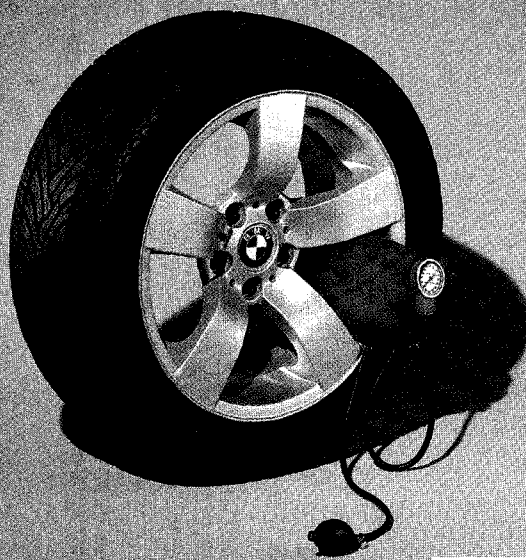
*Keith A. Good
Springfield, Ill.*

Advice & Consent

Cullen Murphy's droll column "Moving On, and On" (June *Atlantic*) reminded me of an early-1950s cartoon depicting Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden. Adam is saying, "We are just going through a period of transition." After that, the deluge.

*J. D. Crumlish
Washington, D.C.*

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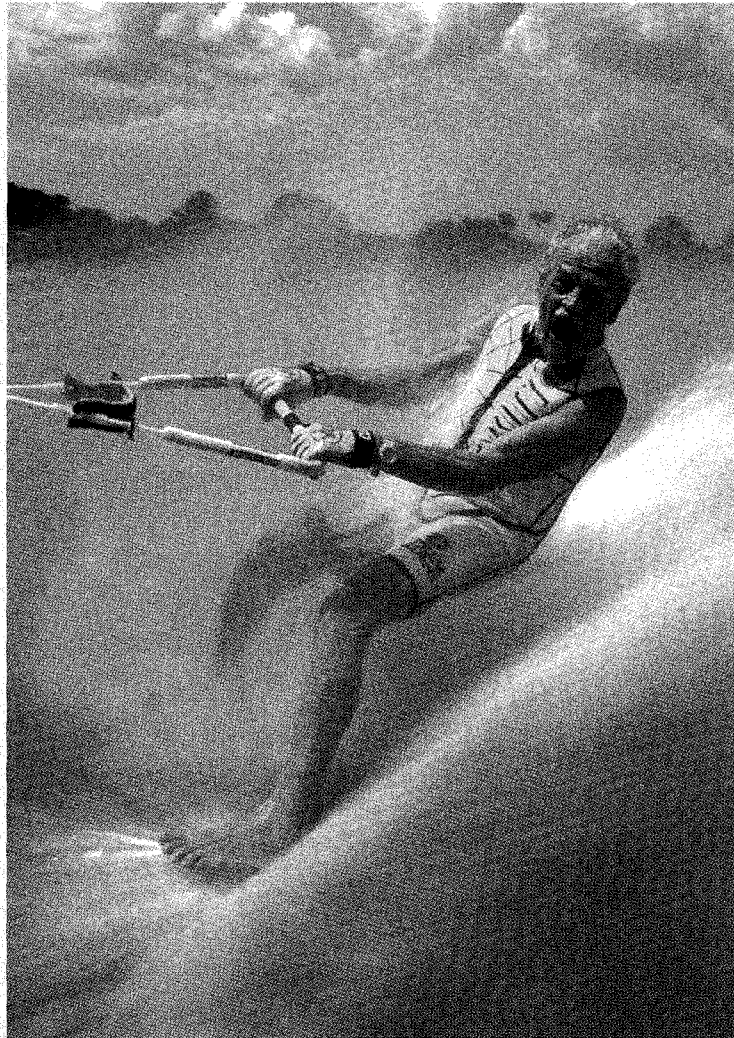


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THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, two views of George Bush's re-electability; what bin Laden and Chirac have in common; pork barrels in the air?

PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

"It is the experience of the father that haunts the son, because the strong hand that George W. Bush has been dealt in 2003—successful war President, popular with the people, and no Republican rival or third-party challenger on the horizon—is the hand his father held in the summer of 1991." PAGE 34

JACK BEATTY

"President Bush won't face a third-party challenge from a former Republican President, as Taft did in 1912, or from a billionaire paranoiac, as his father did in 1992. He will, however, come before the voters with the abysmal distinction of being the first President in decades to have lost America jobs during his tenure."

PAGE 38

PRIMARY SOURCES

"Just how hot was the twentieth century? Probably colder than the Medieval Warm Period, when the Vikings colonized Greenland and olive trees flourished as far north as Germany."

PAGE 42

THE NATION IN NUMBERS

"Each economic era has a resource that drives wealth creation. In the agricultural era it was land. In the industrial era it was energy. Today it may be the airwaves." PAGE 46

PEOPLE LIKE US

We all pay lip service to the melting pot, but we really prefer the congealing pot

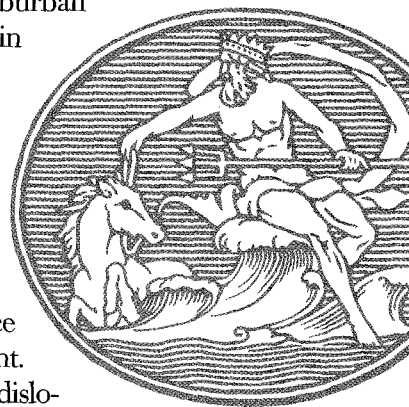
BY DAVID BROOKS

.....

Maybe it's time to admit the obvious. We don't really care about diversity all that much in America, even though we talk about it a great deal. Maybe somewhere in this country there is a truly diverse neighborhood in which a black Pentecostal minister lives next to a white anti-globalization activist, who lives next to an Asian short-order cook, who lives next to a professional golfer, who lives next to a postmodern-literature professor and a cardiovascular surgeon. But I have never been to or heard of that neighborhood. Instead, what I have seen all around the country is people making strenuous efforts to group themselves with people who are basically like themselves.

Human beings are capable of drawing amazingly subtle social distinctions and then shaping their lives around them. In the Washington, D.C., area Democratic lawyers tend to live in suburban Maryland, and Republican lawyers tend to live in suburban Virginia. If you asked a Democratic lawyer to move from her \$750,000 house in Bethesda, Maryland, to a \$750,000 house in Great Falls, Virginia, she'd look at you as if you had just asked her to buy a pickup truck with a gun rack and to shove chewing tobacco in her kid's mouth. In Manhattan the owner of a \$3 million SoHo loft would feel out of place moving into a \$3 million Fifth Avenue apartment. A West Hollywood interior decorator would feel dislocated if you asked him to move to Orange County. In Georgia a barista from Athens would probably not fit in serving coffee in Americus.

It is a common complaint that every place is starting to look the same. But in the information age, the late writer James Chapin once told me, every place becomes more like itself. People are less often tied down to factories and mills, and they can search for places to live on the basis of cultural affinity. Once they find a town in which people share their values, they flock there, and reinforce whatever was distinctive about the town in the first place. Once Boulder, Colorado, became known as congenial to politically progressive mountain bikers, half the politically progressive mountain bikers in the country (it seems) moved there; they made the place so culturally pure that it has become practically a parody of itself.





But people love it. Make no mistake—we are increasing our happiness by segmenting off so rigorously. We are finding places where we are comfortable and where we feel we can flourish. But the choices we make toward that end lead to the very opposite of diversity. The United States might be a diverse nation when considered as a whole, but block by block and institution by institution it is a relatively homogeneous nation.

When we use the word “diversity” today we usually mean racial integration. But even here our good intentions seem to have run into the brick wall of human nature. Over the past generation reformers have tried heroically, and in many cases successfully, to end housing discrimination. But recent patterns aren’t encouraging: according to an analysis of the 2000 census data, the 1990s saw only a slight increase in the racial integration of neighborhoods in the United States. The number of middle-class and upper-middle-class African-American families is rising, but for whatever reasons—racism, psychological comfort—these families tend to congregate in predominantly black neighborhoods.

In fact, evidence suggests that some neighborhoods become more segregated over time. New suburbs in Arizona and

Nevada, for example, start out reasonably well integrated. These neighborhoods don’t yet have reputations, so people choose their houses for other, mostly economic reasons. But as neighborhoods age, they develop personalities (that’s where the Asians live, and that’s where the Hispanics live), and segmentation occurs. It could be that in a few years the new suburbs in the Southwest will be nearly as segregated as the established ones in the Northeast and the Midwest.

Even though race and ethnicity run deep in American society, we should in theory be able to find areas that are at least culturally diverse. But here, too, people show few signs of being truly interested in building diverse communities. If you run a retail company and you’re thinking of opening new stores, you can choose among dozens of consulting firms that are quite effective at locating your potential customers. They can do this because people with similar tastes and preferences tend to congregate by ZIP code.

The most famous of these precision marketing firms is Claritas, which breaks down the U.S. population into sixty-two psycho-demographic clusters, based on

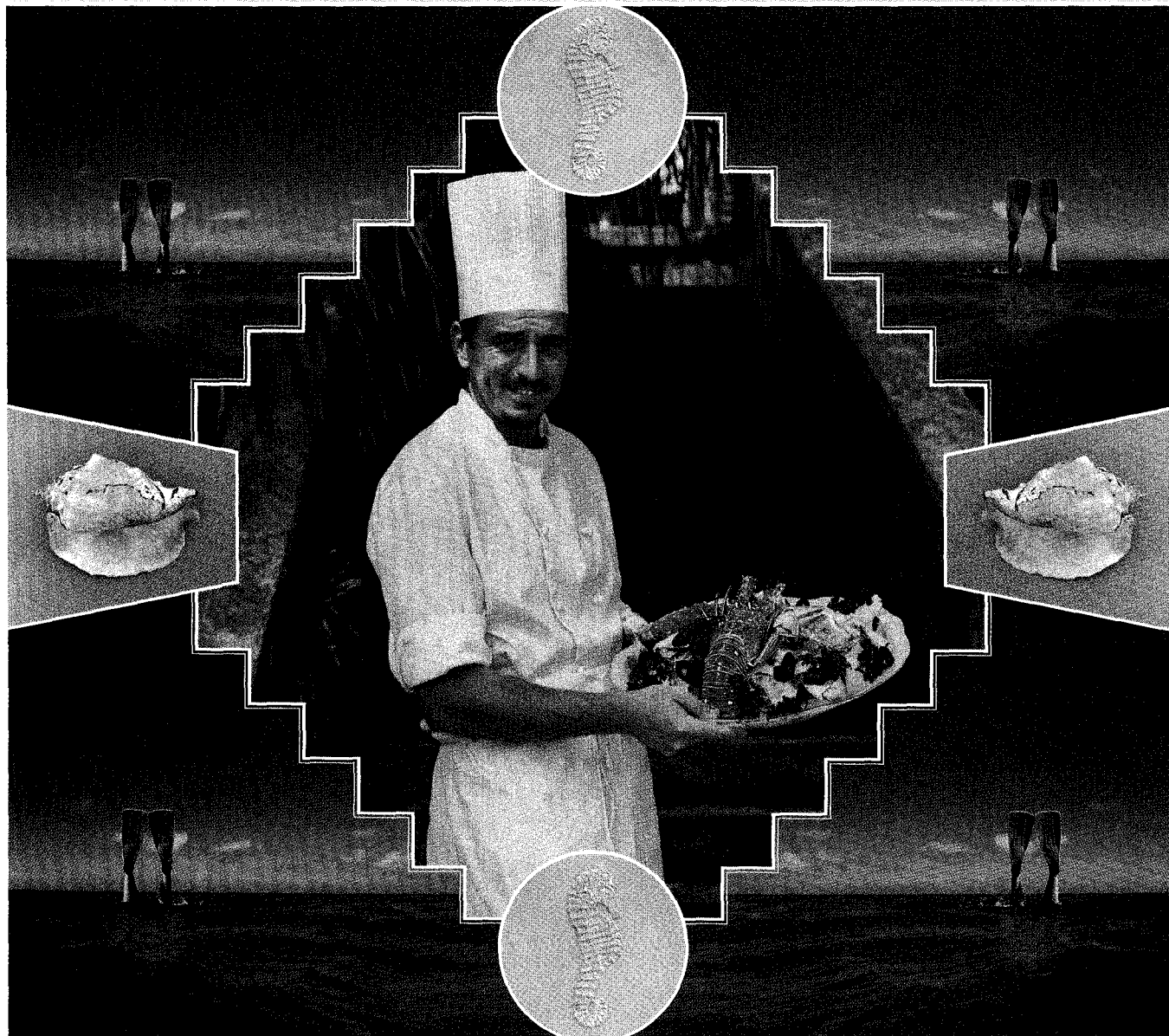
such factors as how much money people make, what they like to read and watch, and what products they have bought in the past. For example, the “suburban sprawl” cluster is composed of young families making about \$41,000 a year and living in fast-growing places such as Burnsville, Minnesota, and Bensalem, Pennsylvania. These people are almost twice as likely as other Americans to have three-way calling. They are two and a half times as likely to buy Light n’ Lively Kid Yogurt. Members of the “towns & gowns” cluster are recent college graduates in places such as Berkeley, California, and Gainesville, Florida. They are big consumers of DoveBars and *Saturday Night Live*. They tend to drive small foreign cars and to read *Rolling Stone* and *Scientific American*.

Looking through the market research, one can sometimes be amazed by how efficiently people cluster—and by how predictable we all are. If you wanted to sell imported wine, obviously you would have to find places where rich people live. But did you know that the sixteen counties with the greatest proportion of imported-wine drinkers are all in the same three metropolitan areas (New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.)? If you tried to open a motor-home dealership in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, you’d probably go broke, because people in this ring of the Philadelphia suburbs think RVs are kind of uncool. But if you traveled just a short way north, to Monroe County, Pennsylvania, you would find yourself in the fifth motor-home-friendliest county in America.

Geography is not the only way we find ourselves divided from people unlike us. Some of us watch Fox News, while others listen to NPR. Some like David Letterman, and others—typically in less urban neighborhoods—like Jay Leno. Some go to charismatic churches; some go to mainstream churches. Americans tend more and more often to marry people with education levels similar to their own, and to befriend people

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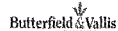
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with backgrounds similar to their own.

My favorite illustration of this latter pattern comes from the first, noncontroversial chapter of *The Bell Curve*. Think of your twelve closest friends, Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray write. If you had chosen them randomly from the American population, the odds that half of your twelve closest friends would be college graduates would be six in a thousand. The odds that half of the twelve would have advanced degrees would be less than one in a million. Have any of your twelve closest friends graduated from Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Princeton, Caltech, MIT, Duke, Dartmouth, Cornell, Columbia, Chicago, or Brown? If you chose your friends randomly from the American population, the odds against your having four or more friends from those schools would be more than a billion to one.

Many of us live in absurdly unlikely groupings, because we have organized our lives that way.

It's striking that the institutions that talk the most about diversity often practice it the least. For example, no group of people sings the diversity anthem more frequently and fervently than administrators at just such elite universities. But elite universities are amazingly undiverse in their values, politics, and mores. Professors in particular are drawn from a rather narrow segment of the population. If faculties reflected the general population, 32 percent of professors would be registered Democrats and 31 percent would be registered Republicans. Forty percent would be evangelical Christians. But a recent study of several universities by the conservative Center for the Study of Popular Culture and the American Enterprise Institute found that roughly 90 percent of those professors in the arts and sciences who had registered with a political party had registered Democratic. Fifty-seven professors at Brown were found on the voter-registration rolls. Of those, fifty-four were Democrats. Of the forty-two professors in the English, history, sociology,

and political-science departments, all were Democrats. The results at Harvard, Penn State, Maryland, and the University of California at Santa Barbara were similar to the results at Brown.

What we are looking at here is human nature. People want to be around others who are roughly like themselves. That's called community. It probably would be psychologically difficult for most Brown professors to share an office with someone who was pro-life, a member of the National Rifle Association, or an evangelical Christian. It's likely that hiring committees would subtly—even unconsciously—screen out any such people they encountered. Republicans and evangelical Christians have sensed that they are not welcome at places like Brown, so they don't even consider working there. In fact, any registered Republican who contemplates a career in academia these days is both a hero and a fool. So, in a semi-self-selective pattern, brainy people with generally liberal social mores flow to academia, and brainy people with generally conservative mores flow elsewhere.

The dream of diversity is like the dream of equality. Both are based on ideals we celebrate even as we undermine them daily. (How many times have you seen someone renounce a high-paying job or pull his child from an elite college on the grounds that these things are bad for equality?) On the one hand, the situation is appalling. It is appalling that Americans know so little about one another. It is appalling that many of us are so narrow-minded that we can't tolerate a few people with ideas significantly different from our own. It's appalling that evangelical Christians are practically absent from entire professions, such as academia, the media, and filmmaking. It's appalling that people should be content to cut themselves off from everyone unlike themselves.

The segmentation of society means that often we don't even have arguments

across the political divide. Within their little validating communities, liberals and conservatives circulate half-truths about the supposed awfulness of the other side. These distortions are believed because it feels good to believe them.

On the other hand, there are limits to how diverse any community can or should be. I've come to think that it is not useful to try to hammer diversity into every neighborhood and institution in the United States. Sure, Augusta National should probably admit women, and university sociology departments should probably hire a conservative or two. It would be nice if all neighborhoods had a good mixture of ethnicities. But human nature being what it is, most places and institutions are going to remain culturally homogeneous.

It's probably better to think about diverse lives, not diverse institutions. Human beings, if they are to live well, will have to move through a series of institutions and environments, which may be individually homogeneous but, taken together, will offer diverse experiences. It might also be a good idea to make national service a rite of passage for young people in this country: it would take them out of their narrow neighborhood segment and thrust them in with people unlike themselves. Finally, it's probably important for adults to get out of their own familiar circles. If you live in a coastal, socially liberal neighborhood, maybe you should take out a subscription to *The Door*, the evangelical humor magazine; or maybe you should visit Branson, Missouri. Maybe you should stop in at a megachurch. Sure, it would be superficial familiarity, but it beats the iron curtains that now separate the nation's various cultural zones.

Look around at your daily life. Are you really in touch with the broad diversity of American life? Do you care? ■

David Brooks, an Atlantic correspondent, is also a contributing editor of Newsweek, a senior editor of The Weekly Standard, and a political analyst for The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer.

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FOUR MORE YEARS?

The invincibility question

"Is George Bush unbeatable?" Suddenly this summer that became the question *du jour* of cable TV and the Sunday talkfests. That it is being asked suggests that many consider it impossible that President Bush will lose to any of the current crop of Democratic candidates. From every standpoint—history, issues, money, persona—the defeat of George W. Bush in 2004 appears improbable.

Consider history. In the twentieth century seven Presidents were defeated or declined to run again, for one (or more) of four reasons: perceived failure as a war leader, economic distress, a revolt in the party, or a third-party candidacy that ruptured the incumbent's political base.

Harry Truman, in 1952, and Lyndon Johnson, in 1968, declined to run again. Both faced a major rebellion in the Democratic Party and a loss of public support after miring the United States in a seemingly unwinnable war in Asia.

Five were rejected. William Howard Taft was done in by the third-party campaign of his patron Theodore Roosevelt. Herbert Hoover was wiped out by the Depression. Gerald Ford presided over the U.S. defeat in Vietnam and was bedeviled by Ronald Reagan right up to the Kansas City convention. Jimmy Carter led the country through a year of ignominy in the Iranian hostage crisis and gave us 21 percent interest rates and 13 percent inflation. George H.W. Bush antagonized his base and watched Ross Perot walk off with the populist right in November.

It is the experience of the father that haunts the son, because the strong hand that George W. Bush has been dealt in 2003—successful war President, popular with the people, and no Republican rival or third-party challenger on the horizon—is the hand his father held in the summer of 1991.

In retrospect, the senior Bush was a successful President. In his first year he liberated Panama and the Berlin Wall came down. In his second he cobbled together

a twenty-eight-nation coalition to drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. In his third he won the most decisive victory in U.S. military history, persuaded the Arabs to sit down with the Israelis at Madrid, and godfathered the reunification of Germany. Entering 1992, he could claim credit for having presided over America's

successful conclusion of the Cold War and having helped to liberate 100 million people in Eastern Europe.

When Norman Schwarzkopf's triumphant Army of

Desert Storm marched up Constitution Avenue in the victory parade in June of 1991, George Bush's approval rating had recently peaked, at 91 percent. Six months later Bush was scrambling to stave off humiliation in New Hampshire. The following November he was defeated, collecting only 37 percent of the vote. What went wrong?

Like Winston Churchill in July of 1945, Bush was a victim of his own and his country's success. With the defeat of communism, the Cold War coalition that had given the Republicans five victories in six presidential elections—and two forty-nine-state landslides—dissolved. Foreign policy, Bush's long suit, ceased to be central to national politics. As a voting issue it was off the table in 1992.

A second cause of Bush's defeat was the alienation of his base. The right had savaged Bush in 1980, when he made the strongest run of all the candidates seeking to deny Reagan the nomination. Elected President in 1988, he reciprocated, treating conservatives to some of the same dismissive contempt with which they had treated him—not only in his appointments but in his policies.

In 1990, at the behest of his budget director, Richard Darman, Bush threw over his "no new taxes" pledge and colluded with Hill Democrats to raise the top tax rates, which Reagan had cut back to 28 percent. In 1991 he went to the UN to declare that America's mission was to create a "New World Order." After the brutal battle to put Clarence

Thomas on the Supreme Court, Bush, at the urging of Senator John Danforth, embraced a civil-rights bill almost identical to the "quota bill" he had rejected. Small businessmen whose work force failed to meet some vague standard of diversity were forced to prove that they were not racists.

Then there were class and ideology. Reagan was Eureka College, Bush was Yale. Reagan was anti-government, Bush was big government. Reagan relished confrontation on matters of principle, Bush believed in compromise. Reagan's eyes misted over as he spoke of a "city on a hill," Bush was put off by "the vision thing."

Conservatives agreed: he was not one of us.

And Bush suffered an irreplaceable loss when Lee Atwater, his consigliere and ambassador to the right, died of a brain tumor. It was Atwater who had pulled George Bush's chestnuts out of the fire in 1988.

As of the end of July 1988, Michael Dukakis, just nominated at Atlanta, had opened up an 18-point lead, and Bush was deeply disliked by the media that wanted an end to the "Decade of Greed." But when Dukakis disappeared from the radar, conservatives—using issues poll-tested by Atwater—ripped into him for his membership in the ACLU ("Anti-Christian Liberties Union"), his hostility to gun ownership, his veto of a Massachusetts law to force school-teachers to lead their students in the Pledge of Allegiance, and his release on furloughs of imprisoned felons, including Willie Horton, who brutalized and raped a woman in Maryland after fleeing while on a weekend pass.

Savaging Dukakis on these social issues all through August and the convention in New Orleans, the Republicans roared from 17 points behind to 8 ahead—a 25-point turnaround. By Labor Day, Bush had a seven-point lead that he never lost. It was Lee Atwater's greatest achievement.

But because Willie Horton was black

POLITICS

PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

and his victim was white, liberals for four years denounced an increasingly defensive Bush for having run a "racist campaign." To a country-club Republican, marinated in guilt over America's past, there is no more wounding charge. In 1992 Bush and James Baker III resolved to run a high-minded Republican campaign. No more Willie Horton ads. And with Atwater gone, Bush had no one to alert him to the rumbles on the right, and no one to tell him that survival depended on skinning Bill Clinton on the social issues, and on integrity and morality, where the Clintons were vulnerable.

The son, who saw all this happen, has gone to school on his father's mistakes and learned his lessons well.

Whereas his father broke his pledge and raised taxes, George W. has mid-wifed two of the three largest tax cuts in history. Whereas the father was contemptuous of conservatives, the son has courted them. Whereas the father vacationed in Kennebunkport, the son goes home to Crawford. Whereas the father is all Yale Yankee, the son is Midland-Odessa. Indeed, aides assure conservatives that although he remains his father's son, in his politics and policies George W. is Reagan's true heir.

All of which again raises the question: Is Bush beatable in 2004?

Right now, it appears most improbable. Not only has Bush won two wars in two years, but after 9/11—when he led the nation in mourning and resolve to avenge the atrocities—Bush bonded with the people in a way that his father never had. Like Reagan, he has an emotional hold on a vast slice of America, a hold that may be almost impossible to shake loose.

And not only has Bush taken pages out of the Reagan playbook, but he and his strategist Karl Rove have taken them out of the playbook of Richard Nixon, the real architect of the New Majority coalition that gave the Republicans control of the White House for a quarter century.

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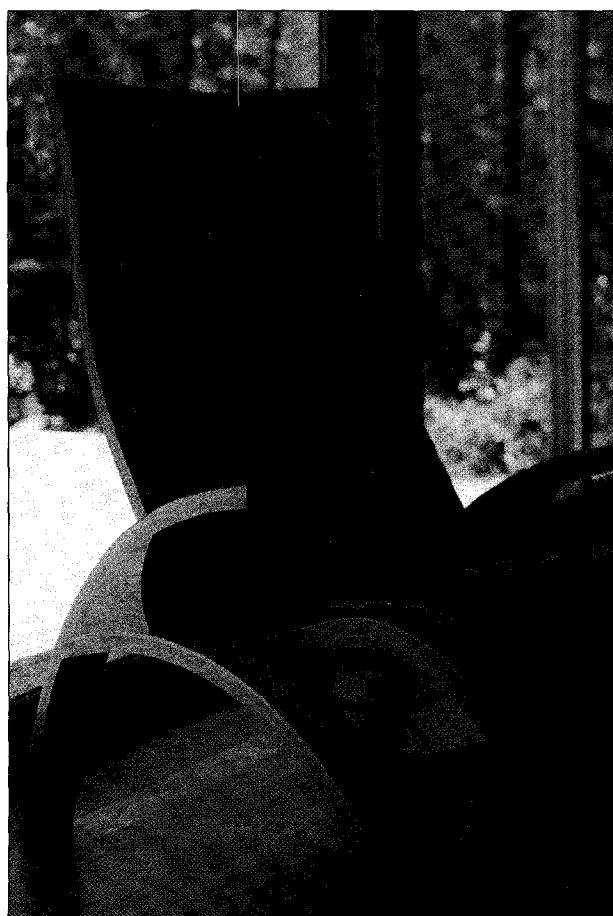
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Just as Nixon financed the Great Society, George Bush has co-opted the best of the Democrats' issues. Throwing over conservative principle, he has colluded with Senator Ted Kennedy to enlarge and expand the powers of the Department of Education. Now he is working on prescription-drug coverage for seniors—the first entitlement program since the advent of Medicare. Thus he has fortified himself along the Democrats' traditional avenues of attack.

How can the Democrats beat him?

As Reagan used to say, there are simple answers—there just aren't any easy ones. The Democrats need to hold on to the share of the black and Hispanic vote that they carried in 2000, and to bring home, or deny Bush, the share of the white vote that he got in 2000. What are the simplest ways to accomplish this?

One, prevent a Green Party run, which in 2000 siphoned off almost three million votes that would have given Al Gore the presidency.

Two, make a novena for a third-party candidate to run to Bush's right. The populist George Wallace held Nixon to 43 percent of the vote in 1968 and almost cost him the presidency. With Wallace out in 1972, Nixon rolled up 61 percent. Without a populist candidate on the right in 1988, Bush senior carried 53 percent. With Ross Perot in 1992, he carried 37 percent.

Though some in the media may portray George W. Bush as a right-wing extremist, he is surprisingly vulnerable to a challenge from his right. Issues: his soaring deficits; his preferential option for the rich; his sellout of conservative principle to embrace big government; his failure to protect America's borders and control immigration; his cave-in on the assault-gun law; his concessions to the gay Log Cabin Republicans; his refusal to put a stop to race preferences and reverse discrimination; his free-trade

zealotry, which has helped to kill one of every eight manufacturing jobs in the United States while creating jobs in China; and, potentially the most explosive, his "quagmire" in Iraq. If U.S. soldiers are still dying from sniper fire and ambushes in Iraq in September of 2004, Bush could be vulnerable to the campaign slogan "Support Our Troops—Bring Them Home Now!"

Continued casualties would also raise anew the questions of why we went into Iraq in the first place, who "cooked the books" on the intel, who misled us about the weapons of mass destruction. The President dismisses this as revisionist history. But after World War I—which produced Bolshevism, fascism, and Nazism—the revisionist historians, who indicted the "merchants of death" and "British propagandists" who had "lied us into war," carried the day.

The Democrats are paralyzed in making a case against Bush on most populist issues because they agree with him on so many: war in Iraq, free trade, affirmative action, open borders, big government, amnesty for illegal aliens, foreign aid, gay rights.

Indeed, it has been the great success of Bush-Rove to talk the talk and affect the swagger of cowboy conservatives while occupying the center and the center-left and crowding out the mod-

erate Democrats. When Senator Kennedy is hailing the President's "No Child Left Behind" education program and celebrating his prescription-drug plan, the only Democrats who can offer a clear alternative are too far left to carry a southern state.

The Bush-Rove strategy will work only as long as the right grins and bears it. But with the Beltway right having been declawed, neutered, and house-broken long ago, with no Republican challenger, and with no third party visible on the right, the strategy appears to have worked, and Bush appears to have dodged the bullet that killed his father's presidency.

This reduces the hopes of the Democrats to three possibilities, over which they have no control.

First is a continuance of the jobless recovery over which Bush has presided, in which three million private-sector jobs have vanished since he took office. But with interest rates now slashed by Alan Greenspan to one percent, the deficit at \$400 billion and rising, the third largest tax cut in history about to take effect, and a falling dollar propelling exports, even pessimists are predicting growth of four or five percent for 2004.

Second is a souring of America's victories in Afghanistan and Iraq by continued and widening combat in which Americans are dying every day. Our tolerance for that kind of war has not been tested since Vietnam. A June *Washington Post* poll showing that 44 percent of the nation already finds the casualty rate in Iraq intolerable does not bode well for Bush, or for the country—especially with Arabs and Muslims from outside Iraq turning up in firefight.

Third is a major scandal of the kind that has bedeviled Republican Presidents, though usually in their second terms: the Sherman Adams affair, Watergate, Iran-contra. Here Bush seems most vulnerable to revelations either of misreading intelligence prior to 9/11 or of cherry-picking intelligence to make a

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case for war. In Britain the issue may yet prove fatal to Tony Blair.

But events may conspire to kill Democratic hopes. If some terrorist horror on the scale of 9/11 occurs, how many Americans will rise as one man to cry, "Get me Howard Dean"? Will they not, rather, reflexively rally to the tough guys who win wars—Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell—just as Israelis rally to Ariel Sharon each time a new atrocity is perpetrated by Hamas?

From the standpoint of geography, too, it is difficult to see how the Democrats can do it. In forty years they have elected three Presidents, all from the South. Although three of the potential nominees are southerners (John Edwards, of North Carolina; Bob Graham, of Florida; General Wesley Clark, of Arkansas), none has broken out of low single digits nationally and none is running better than fifth in Iowa and New Hampshire, where the voting is just five months off. Today Bush would sweep every southern state, and he now leads Edwards, Graham, Richard Gephardt, and John Kerry even in their home states.

The Bush team has a war chest unrivaled in presidential history. The Democrats are scratching for cash. Bush also has something Nixon and Reagan never did: what Daniel Patrick Moynihan called "second and third echelons of advocacy." Conservatives, libertarians, and populists of the right dominate talk radio, the Internet, and the cable-TV channels that are nibbling the network news to death, and they are fully competitive on the op-ed pages of the national press.

Finally, there are the debates. They were decisive in the victories of John F. Kennedy in 1960, Carter in 1976 (after Ford's gaffe on Poland), Reagan in 1980, and Bush in 2000, when Gore booted it away. The last best hope of a Democratic Party to erase its deficit in a single night is the possibility that the President will stumble or his opponent will appear masterly or set the country afire with his passion, charisma, or ideas. But it is difficult to see how a

Gephardt, Kerry, Dean, or Joseph Lieberman could do that in a match against a newly confident and assertive George W. Bush.

Can Bush be beaten? Assuredly—but absent celestial intervention, maybe not by any of the current crop of Demo-

cratic candidates. As Damon Runyon observed, the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but that's the way to bet. ■

Patrick J. Buchanan, the editor of The American Conservative, challenged George H.W. Bush in the primaries of 1992.

THE ONE-TERM TRADITION

Bush should not be overly sanguine about his chances for re-election

If George W. Bush knows what's good for him, he won't run for a second term—the nemesis of presidential reputation. If Bill Clinton had retired after one term, both he and the public would have been spared his impeachment over the Lewinsky matter. A single-term Ronald Reagan would not have somnambulated into the impeachment-worthy Iran-

contra affair. If Richard Nixon hadn't run again, "Watergate" would refer merely to the complex at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Rock Creek Parkway, in the District of Columbia. If FDR had not won a third term, in 1940, he would have been remembered as much for his dictatorial attempt to pack the Supreme Court, among other hubristic second-term blunders, as for the New Deal.

Haunted by the ghosts of the doughboys he had led into World War I, Woodrow Wilson in his second term lost his capacity for pragmatic accommodation in his fight for the League of Nations, which was to him the only redemption for their sacrifice and the only balm for his guilt. Refusing to compromise with the Senate, Wilson broke his health campaigning for the League; and then the Senate, in his words, "broke the heart of the world" by rejecting it. William McKinley and Abraham Lincoln paid for their second terms not with their reputations but with their lives.

The second-term curse is democracy's revenge on unaccountable power. A President who does not have to answer to the voters is a sort of lame-duck king.

Knowing that his power is inexorably diminishing can tempt a President to overreach before it runs out. Beginning with the second administration of Thomas Jefferson, whose "Dambargo" shut down the nation's commerce ("At New York during 1809," a nineteenth-century historian tells us, "thirteen

hundred men were imprisoned for no other crime than being ruined by the embargo"), few lame-duck Presidents have resisted the temptation to act like kings—a proclivity to trouble sleep next November.

Since the era of mass politics began, with Andrew Jackson's victorious campaign in 1828, nine of the nineteen Presidents who sought a consecutive second term have been spared the embarrassment by either their party (Franklin Pierce) or the voters. Seven Presidents chose not to run for a second full term. Five Vice Presidents who came to office after the death or resignation of a President have been denied election to a full term. If we subtract the five one-term Presidents who died in office, nineteen of the twenty-nine remaining Presidents since Jackson were effectively one-termers. Clearly, "the 'tradition' of two terms," one careful scholar concludes, "is no tradition at all . . . The American presidential tenure experience comes closer to being a one-term tradition."

What are the odds that George W. Bush will be a one-termer? For any President, history suggests, the odds of

POLITICS
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re-election are about even; for Bush they are perhaps worse than that, whatever the polls now suggest. There are no laws of political history, but a review of why incumbents have lost may help us understand why Bush may lose too.

The nineteenth-century incumbents lost for reasons too various and time-bound for useful comparison. Not so with their twentieth-century fellows in defeat, who lost because a third party split the vote (Taft), or the business cycle disobliged them (Hoover, Carter), or both (G.H.W. Bush). President Bush won't face a third-party challenge from a former Republican President, as Taft did in 1912, or from a billionaire paranoiac, as his father did in 1992. He will, however, come before the voters with the abysmal distinction of being the first President in decades to have lost America jobs during his tenure: that is, barring a barely conceivable surge in growth, there will be fewer total jobs in November of 2004 than there were in January of 2001. Even Bush's father, even *Jimmy Carter*, created jobs. In November of 2004 interest rates and inflation will be low, unemployment may be lower than now and growth higher, but a chart graphing the number of jobs created or lost in every presidency since 1928 will still show every President above the line of ignominy except two. You don't want to be compared to Herbert Hoover.

You don't want to be compared to Lyndon Johnson, either—the last of the four twentieth-century Presidents who did not seek re-election. On the night that the first, Theodore Roosevelt, was elected to his first full term, in 1904, he promised not to run again in 1908. Calvin Coolidge would have won easily had he run in 1928. Harry Truman did not have a prayer in 1952. Johnson needed a prayer in 1968. Korea sank Truman. The Korean “police action,” as he called it to avoid “war,” had the support of nearly three quarters of Americans when it began, in 1950; but stalemated, it became deeply unpopular. Vietnam sank Johnson—its endlessness, but also his inveterately deceitful handling of it.

In December of 1966 Arthur Schlesinger Jr. remarked on a “diffuse discontent and disquietude” in the country that was prompted by “President Johnson’s character” as well as by the war. Johnson’s escalation of the war began in deception, with the Tonkin Gulf incident. After three North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the USS *Maddox* in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 2, 1964, hitting it with a single bullet, and after the captain of the *Maddox* made a claim two days later (quickly retracted) that a second attack had been made on his ship and the *Turner Joy*, Johnson asked Congress for a resolution—which he later likened to “grandma’s nightshirt” because “it covered everything”—authorizing him to take offensive action in Vietnam to defend U.S. forces. He did not tell Congress that the *Maddox* had been conducting electronic espionage against the North, or that the whole incident had been preceded by South Vietnamese commando raids on the North Vietnamese coast—a context of provocation that would have undercut his charge of North Vietnamese “aggression.”

Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale, then a flight officer from the carrier USS *Ticonderoga*, who was patrolling the air above the *Maddox* and the *Turner Joy* at the time of the alleged second attack, told his superiors that he saw “no boats, no boat wakes, no ricochets off boats,” and “no boat impacts, no torpedo wakes.” Ordered to bomb North Vietnam the next morning, in answer to “last night’s attack on the destroyers,” Stockdale later wrote that he “felt like I had been doused with ice water,” saying, “How do I get in touch with the president? He’s going off half-cocked.” In a 1968 hearing investigating the second attack—the justification for the Tonkin Gulf resolution and the foundation stone of the Vietnam War—senators confronted Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara with evidence that the Administration had deceived Congress about the attack. “I must say,” Senator J. William Fulbright told McNamara, “this raises very serious questions about

how you make decisions to go to war.”

“Credibility gap” entered the political lexicon in 1965, according to the historian Robert Dallek, one of Johnson’s biographers, in reference not only to Johnson’s misrepresentations about Vietnam but also to his “exaggerating” of the threat of a communist takeover in the Dominican Republic, which he used to justify sending in the Marines. “How do you know when Lyndon Johnson is telling the truth?” a period joke went. “When he pulls his earlobe or scratches his chin, he’s telling the truth. When he begins to move his lips, you know he’s lying.” After the Tet Offensive, in January and February of 1968, exposed the chasm between the Administration’s claims of progress in the war and the reality, Johnson disappeared over the edge of his credibility gap and significant opposition to his renomination emerged from within his own party. On March 31, 1968, perhaps mindful of Truman’s similar speech on March 30, 1952, Johnson announced that he would not seek another term. Less than four years earlier he had won office by the largest popular-vote margin to that point in history.

The reader will see where this is going. The still missing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction constitute Bush’s Tonkin Gulf. We now know that everybody in the Administration above the rank of messenger—except the President—knew that the documents linking Saddam Hussein to an effort to obtain uranium from Niger were forgeries. We know that the intelligence agencies cast doubt on Saddam’s continued possession of WMD and on his supposed ties to Osama bin Laden. We know more every day. By next year we should know enough to decide whether the President was misled or misled us about the WMD and the “imminent threat” posed by a nation that spent \$1 billion on defense last year to a nation that spent nearly \$400 billion.

Operation Iraqi Freedom was a popular war. The occupation of Iraq will not be popular. Already Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, has admitted that our troops face a “guerrilla war” in

Iraq, and military experts have revived a location from the Vietnam War to describe current U.S. strategy—"counterinsurgency." At this rate it won't be long before Bush starts urging Americans weary of what many will call the Iraqi "quagmire" to "stay the course."

If Bush had leveled with us about the millennial strategy behind his war, if he had said, "We don't know whether Saddam has WMD, but we think he does. We are pretty sure he has no current ties to al Qaeda. We know he had nothing to do with 9/11. But we must put American lives at risk and kill Iraqi soldiers and civilians, possibly in great numbers, and we must spend billions occupying and rebuilding Iraq after Saddam is gone, in order to make Iraq a democracy and unleash a tsunami of democracy across the Arab world, which in the long run is our best defense against Islamist terrorism"—if he had delivered such a speech, Congress would have voted down his war resolution. The UN Security Council would have dispelled any wisp of international legitimacy by not giving its oblique endorsement of a U.S. attack on Iraq. There would have been no war.

"The war is supposed to be over," a sergeant in the 110° heat of an Iraqi summer told a reporter for *The Washington Post*, "but every day we hear of another soldier getting killed. Is it worth it? Saddam isn't in power anymore. The locals want us to leave. Why are we still here?" If the guerrilla war in Iraq drags on, more and more Americans are likely to ask the same question; and many will be led to ask how we got there in the first place. In his famous 1971 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, John Kerry, a decorated veteran of the war, said, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" By next fall Americans may be asking a tougher question: How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a lie? **A**

Jack Beatty is a senior editor of The Atlantic and the author of The Rascal King (1992) and The World According to Peter Drucker (1998). He is at work on a book about business and politics in post-Civil War America.

WHAT'S MY NEXT SETUP?
WHITE HOUSE PLANS FUTURE TOP GUN - STYLE PHOTO OPS.

ARRIVAL IN BAGHDAD

PRES. BUSH, ABOARD CHARIOT, LEADS A PROCESSION COMPLETE WITH SPEAR CARRIERS

AND DEMOCRATS

WEARING VELS.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PRESIDENT

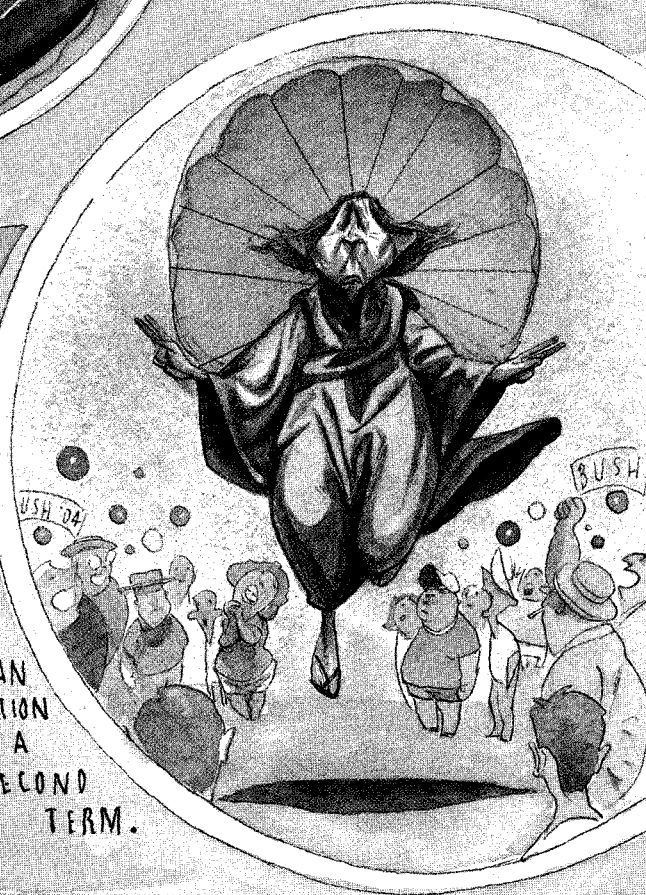
PRES. BUSH APPEARS IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK ATOP A MOTORCADE OF HYDROGEN-FUELED SNOWMOBILES.

CONVENTION 2004 "SECOND COMING"

PRES. BUSH, IN PARACHUTE JUMP, DESCENDS INTO NEW YORK CITY TO ACCEPT THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION FOR A

SECOND TERM.

STEVE BRODNER '03



PRIMARY SOURCES

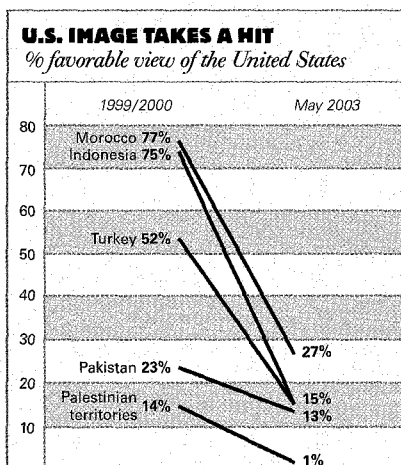
Selections from reports, studies, and other documents. This month: Osama bin Laden and Jacques Chirac voted able "to do the right thing"; the coming suburban ghetto?; why the Vikings would have liked global warming

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Osama and Jacques Show

What do Osama bin Laden and Jacques Chirac have in common? In a recent Pew Research Center sampling of post-Iraq War attitudes around the world, a majority of Jordanians expressed confidence in both men's ability "to do the right thing." And it wasn't just Jordan: bin Laden inspired the faith of majorities in Indonesia and the Palestinian territories, as Chirac did in Lebanon and Morocco. (In the Islamic world George W. Bush was trusted by a majority of those surveyed only in Kuwait.) In every Muslim-majority country surveyed, pro-U.S. sentiment in general has fallen precipitously over the past year, with little sign of improvement since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. In none of these countries except Nigeria and Kuwait does pro-American sentiment break 30 percent—and in Jordan and the Palestinian territories it has dropped all the way to one percent.

— "Pew Global Attitudes Project: Views of a Changing World," the Pew Research Center



Let Slip the Odds of War

Consider almost any recent or ongoing civil war and you're likely to find somebody blaming "ethnic tensions" or "tribal rivalries" for it. This is largely unfair, according to a World Bank review of fifty-two such conflicts from 1960 to 1999, which uses a statistician's approach to

argue that the causes of civil strife are more often economic than ethnic. All other factors being equal, a low-income country has a 17.1 percent chance of falling into civil war in a given five-year period. Economic development significantly reduces that chance: if two percent growth is sustained for a decade, the risk of war drops to 12.3 percent. Economic diversification also helps: the odds of civil war fall to 11 percent when primary-commodity exports (notably oil) account for 10 percent or less of gross domestic product, but they rise to a remarkable 33 percent in countries where such exports account for more than 30 percent of GDP. Ethnic diversity has a weaker impact. Countries so diverse that no single group can dominate have a slightly below average probability of civil strife, and in societies in which one ethnic group holds a majority, the chances of war are higher than average—but only just. The single best (if almost tautological) predictor of the likelihood of civil war turns out to be neither economics nor demographics but history: a country that has just emerged from civil war runs a 44 percent risk of a return to conflict within five years.

— "Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy," the World Bank

Money for Nothing

Is economic aid a more effective weapon against terrorism than military force? It's an attractive and much talked about idea, but a new study by the RAND Corporation suggests that if funds are insufficient or poorly distributed (as they very often are), aid programs run the risk of backfiring and increasing support for terrorism. Examining three recent cases in which development policies sought to reduce terrorism (in the southern Philippines, the territories occupied by Israel, and Northern Ireland), the study concludes that the first two efforts failed utterly and were ineffective in inhibiting political violence. Both programs suffered from corruption and favoritism, and the sums involved were

relatively small—in the Philippines averaging just \$6.00 per capita per year in the targeted areas. Only in Northern Ireland did development money calm political violence, because only there was aid delivered in a transparent and evenhanded fashion, and on a large enough scale (more than \$500 per capita annually). Can the United States, as it dispenses aid in a hostile Muslim world, improve on this record? Perhaps—but the report's authors note that during the recent war in Afghanistan, the United States pledged \$150 million to help alleviate poverty in Uzbekistan, a Muslim ally. That sum translates to a familiar number: \$6.00 per capita per year.

— "Terrorism & Development: Using Social and Economic Development to Inhibit a Resurgence of Terrorism," the RAND Corporation

SOCIETY

Rich Student, Poor Student

The Supreme Court has upheld at least some varieties of race-based affirmative action, but perhaps college administrators should be worrying less about their students' color and more about their socioeconomic class. According to an ambitious study from the Century Foundation, 74 percent of students at America's 146 most selective colleges come from the most privileged quarter of the U.S. population, whereas just three percent emerge from the most disadvantaged quarter. Blacks and Hispanics are also under-represented, but far less starkly: they make up 12 percent of students at these colleges, compared with 28 percent of the country's college-age population. Overall, the number of black and Hispanic students is four times as large as the number of students from the bottom fourth of America's socioeconomic ladder who attend top-tier schools—which raises the possibility that middle- and upper-income students from minority groups could be benefiting from affirmative action at the expense of poorer, more disadvantaged whites. The

"The clams were the only ones that benefited from my arthritis.

Sorry guys, I'm back."



VIOXX PROVIDES POWERFUL 24-HOUR RELIEF OF ARTHRITIS.

▼ The less pain you feel, the more everyday victories you can achieve. And VIOXX may help. VIOXX is a prescription medicine for the relief of arthritis pain and stiffness.

ONE PILL FOR ALL DAY, ALL NIGHT RELIEF.

Just one little pill can relieve your pain and stiffness all day and all night for a full 24 hours.

VIOXX TARGETS A KEY SOURCE OF PAIN.

VIOXX specifically targets only the COX-2 enzyme, which is a key source of pain and inflammation. In clinical studies, once-daily VIOXX effectively reduced pain and stiffness.

TAKE WITH OR WITHOUT FOOD.

You don't have to worry about scheduling VIOXX around meals.

VIOXX IS NOT A NARCOTIC.

FIND OUT IF VIOXX CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE.

Ask your doctor or healthcare professional about VIOXX today. Call 1-800-MERCK-30 for more information, or visit vioxx.com.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT VIOXX.

People with allergic reactions, such as asthma, to aspirin or other arthritis medicines should not take VIOXX. In rare cases, serious stomach problems, such as bleeding, can occur without warning.

Tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney disease, or a history of angina, heart attack, or a blocked artery in your heart. VIOXX cannot take the place of aspirin for the prevention of heart attack or stroke. VIOXX should not be used by women in late pregnancy.

VIOXX has been extensively studied in large clinical trials. Commonly reported side effects included upper respiratory infection, diarrhea, nausea, and high blood pressure. Report any unusual symptoms to your doctor.

Please see the Patient Product Information for VIOXX on the next page for additional information that should be discussed with your doctor.

ONCE DAILY
VIOXX®
(rofecoxib)

FOR EVERYDAY VICTORIES

Patient Information about
VIOXX® (rofecoxib tablets and oral suspension)
VIOXX® (pronounced "VI-ox")
for Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis and Pain
Generic name: rofecoxib ("ro-fa-COX-ib")

9183907

You should read this information before you start taking VIOXX*. Also, read the leaflet each time you refill your prescription, in case any information has changed. This leaflet provides only a summary of certain information about VIOXX. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals that contains more complete information. This leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss VIOXX when you start taking your medicine and at regular checkups.

What is VIOXX?

VIOXX is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is used to reduce pain and inflammation (swelling and soreness). VIOXX is available as a tablet or a liquid that you take by mouth.

VIOXX is a medicine for:

- relief of osteoarthritis (the arthritis caused by age-related "wear and tear" on bones and joints)
- relief of rheumatoid arthritis in adults
- management of acute pain in adults (like the short-term pain you can get after a dental or surgical operation)
- treatment of menstrual pain (pain during women's monthly periods).

Who should not take VIOXX?

Do not take VIOXX if you:

- have had an allergic reaction such as asthma attacks, hives, or swelling of the throat and face to aspirin or other NSAIDs (for example, ibuprofen and naproxen).
- have had an allergic reaction to rofecoxib, which is the active ingredient of VIOXX, or to any of its inactive ingredients. (See Inactive Ingredients at the end of this leaflet.)

What should I tell my doctor before and during treatment with VIOXX?

Tell your doctor if you are:

- pregnant or plan to become pregnant. VIOXX should not be used in late pregnancy because it may harm the fetus.
- breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed. It is not known whether VIOXX is passed through to human breast milk and what its effects could be on a nursing child.

Tell your doctor if you have:

- history of angina, heart attack or a blocked artery in your heart
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- heart failure
- high blood pressure
- had an allergic reaction to aspirin or other NSAIDs
- had a serious stomach problem in the past.

Tell your doctor about:

- any other medical problems or allergies you have now or have had.
- all medicines that you are taking or plan to take, even those you can get without a prescription.

Tell your doctor if you develop:

- serious stomach problems such as ulcer or bleeding symptoms (for instance, stomach burning or black stools, which are signs of possible stomach bleeding).
- unexplained weight gain or swelling of the feet and/or legs.
- skin rash or allergic reactions. If you have a severe allergic reaction, get medical help right away.

How should I take VIOXX?

VIOXX should be taken once a day. Your doctor will decide what dose of VIOXX you should take and how long you should take it. You may take VIOXX with or without food.

Can I take VIOXX with other medicines?

Tell your doctor about all of the other medicines you are taking or plan to take while you are on VIOXX, even other medicines that you can get without a prescription. Your doctor may want to check that your medicines are working properly together if you are taking other medicines such as:

- warfarin (a blood thinner)
- theophylline (a medicine used to treat asthma)
- rifampin (an antibiotic)
- ACE inhibitors (medicines used for high blood pressure and heart failure)
- lithium (a medicine used to treat a certain type of depression).

VIOXX cannot take the place of aspirin for prevention of heart attack or stroke. If you are currently taking aspirin for this purpose, you should not discontinue taking aspirin without consulting your doctor.

What are the possible side effects of VIOXX?

Serious but rare side effects that have been reported in patients taking VIOXX and/or related medicines have included:

- Serious stomach problems, such as stomach and intestinal bleeding, can occur with or without warning symptoms. These problems, if severe, could lead to hospitalization or death. Although this happens rarely, you should watch for signs that you may have this serious side effect and tell your doctor right away.
- Heart attacks and similar serious events have been reported in patients taking VIOXX.
- Serious allergic reactions including swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat which may cause difficulty breathing or swallowing and wheezing occur rarely but may require treatment right away. Severe skin reactions have also been reported.
- Serious kidney problems occur rarely, including acute kidney failure and worsening of chronic kidney failure.
- Severe liver problems, including hepatitis, jaundice and liver failure, occur rarely in patients taking NSAIDs, including VIOXX. Tell your doctor if you develop symptoms of liver problems. These include nausea, tiredness, itching, tenderness in the right upper abdomen, and flu-like symptoms.

In addition, the following side effects have been reported: anxiety, blurred vision, colitis, confusion, decreased levels of sodium in the blood, depression, fluid in the lungs, hair loss, hallucinations, increased levels of potassium in the blood, insomnia, low blood cell counts, menstrual disorder, palpitations, pancreatitis, severe increase in blood pressure, tingling sensation, unusual headache with stiff neck (aseptic meningitis), vertigo.

More common, but less serious side effects reported with VIOXX have included the following:

Upper and/or lower respiratory infection and/or inflammation
Headache
Dizziness
Diarrhea
Nausea and/or vomiting
Heartburn, stomach pain and upset
Swelling of the legs and/or feet
High blood pressure
Back pain
Tiredness
Urinary tract infection.

These side effects were reported in at least 2% of osteoarthritis patients receiving daily doses of VIOXX 12.5 mg to 25 mg in clinical studies.

The side effects described above do not include all of the side effects reported with VIOXX. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about side effects. Your doctor or pharmacist can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects. Any time you have a medical problem you think may be related to VIOXX, talk to your doctor.

What else can I do to help manage my arthritis pain?

Talk to your doctor about:

- Exercise
- Controlling your weight
- Hot and cold treatments
- Using support devices.

What else should I know about VIOXX?

This leaflet provides a summary of certain information about VIOXX. If you have any questions or concerns about VIOXX, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or pain, talk to your health professional. Your pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals.

Do not share VIOXX with anyone else; it was prescribed only for you. It should be taken only for the condition for which it was prescribed.

Keep VIOXX and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Inactive Ingredients:

Oral suspension: citric acid (monohydrate), sodium citrate (dihydrate), sorbitol solution, strawberry flavor, xanthan gum, sodium methylparaben, sodium propylparaben.

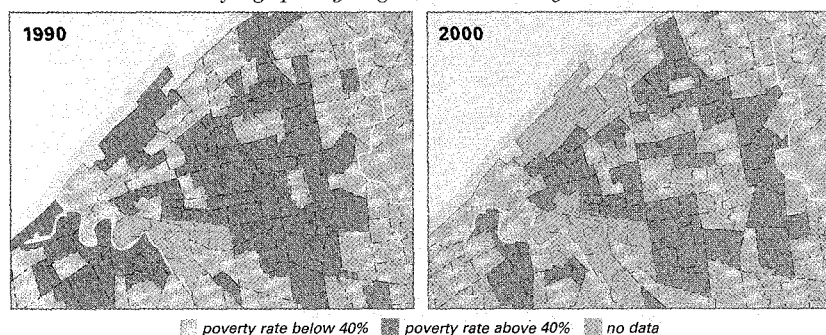
Tablets: croscarmellose sodium, hydroxypropyl cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and yellow ferric oxide.

Issued September 2002

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DOWNTOWN CLEVELAND*Decrease in the number of high-poverty neighborhoods in the city center***The Suburban Ghetto?**

The good news, according to a recent study by the Brookings Institution, is that the number of U.S. neighborhoods with a high poverty rate declined dramatically in the 1990s. The bad news lurking in the study is that poverty hasn't gone away; indeed, in some cases it has migrated from urban centers to inner-ring suburbs. The study finds that the number of neighborhoods with a poverty rate of 40 percent or higher dropped by more than a quarter in the 1990s, from 3,417 to 2,510, significantly reducing the amount of fertile ground for social ills such as gang violence and poorly performing schools. But the study also warns that America's cities may have entered a period of transition, in which the poor are gradually shifting out of a gentrifying urban core only to become clustered elsewhere. Indeed, poverty rates in some inner-ring suburbs rose during the 1990s, creating something of a bull's-eye pattern when plotted on a map—and hinting at a future for suburbia that is far more dismal than the strip malls and SUVs of today.

—“Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s,” the Brookings Institution

study's authors are careful to say that socioeconomic diversity should serve as a complement to and not a replacement for racial balance. But their numbers suggest that if colleges are serious about admitting truly diverse student bodies, a formal system of class-based affirmative action should be at least as high a priority as the ongoing defense of racial preferences.

—“Socioeconomic Status, Race/Ethnicity, and Selective College Admissions,” the Century Foundation

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**Greenland Ho!**

Just how hot was the twentieth century? Warmer than its immediate predecessors, but probably colder than the Medieval

Warm Period, when the Vikings colonized Greenland and olive trees flourished as far north as Germany. After conducting a comprehensive review of more than 100 studies of coral, glacial ice cores, tree rings, and other indicators of climatic history, a meta-study published earlier this year in the journal *Climate Research* concludes that despite widespread concern over global climate change, the twentieth century was not unusually warm by historical standards. (This year's extended East Coast winter might suggest that so far the same holds true for the twenty-first.) The study's authors admit that the historical data on climate change are often scattered, particularly in the Southern Hemisphere, and they are also quick to note—no doubt anticipating environmentalist critiques—that

the lack of extreme warmth in the twentieth century “does not argue against human impacts on local and regional scales.” But even with these caveats, the study makes a strong case that human societies have always been able to cope with significant climatic shifts. Or almost always; as the Medieval Warm Period came to an end, so did Viking life in Greenland.

—“Proxy Climatic and Environmental Changes of the Past 1000 Years,” Willie Soon and Sallie Baliunas, *Climate Research*

Enter the Matrix

Sure, action video games may desensitize kids to violence and mayhem, but—according to a study conducted at the University of Rochester—they also improve visual skills. Researchers surveyed male undergraduates who reported playing games such as *Grand Theft Auto III* and *Halo* several times a week (only one qualified female subject could be found) and determined that frequent gamers tend to notice fast-vanishing objects more often than nongamers, and are better at identifying letters that appear quickly and then disappear. The study's authors have suggested that these findings could be put to use in designing training programs for fighter pilots and other military personnel, or in helping to rehabilitate the visually impaired—which was widely construed in the press to mean that video games are good for you. For the man on the street, though, the skill set improved by playing video games would seem to be useful primarily for the purpose of ... playing video games.

—“Action Video Game Modifies Visual Selective Attention,” C. Shawn Green and Daphne Bavelier, *Nature*

For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/2003/09/primarysources.htm

UP IN THE AIR

As the world goes wireless, the radio spectrum is emerging as the most valuable natural resource of the information age

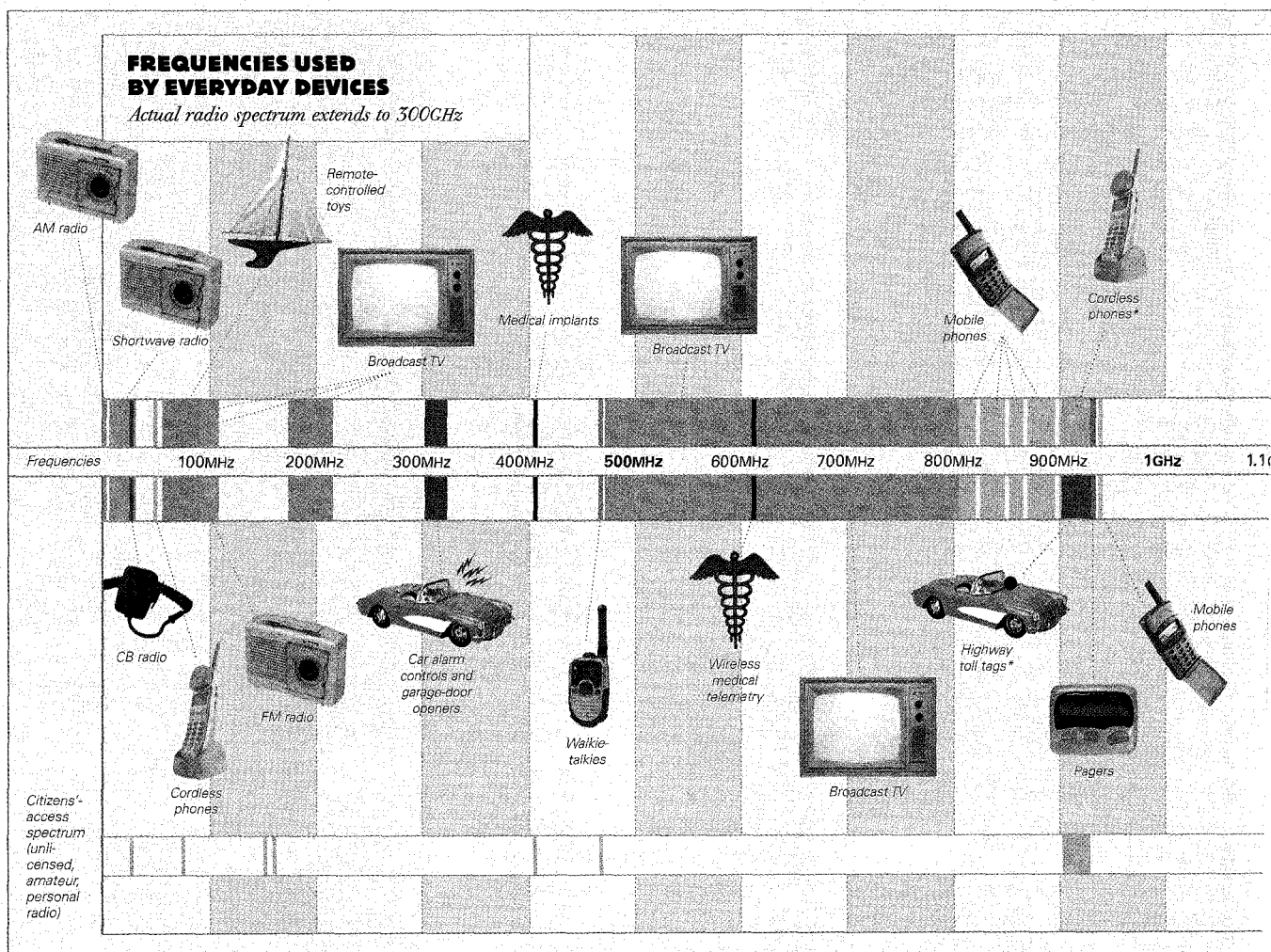
Each economic era has a resource that drives wealth creation. In the agricultural era it was land. In the industrial era it was energy. Today it may be the airwaves, also known as the radio-frequency spectrum—the most valuable resource of the emerging information economy. Economists estimate that in the United States alone the commercial value of access to it could be more than \$750 billion. But it's a resource that's being managed wastefully and inequitably, and what's at stake is the future of technologies that can enable the tremendous economic and social potential of anywhere, anytime access to high-speed data networking.

The spectrum is nothing more than the range of those electromagnetic frequencies that are useful for transmitting radio signals. It is divided into bands and measured in hertz (Hz); the wider the band, the more information-carrying capacity it has. The illustration below shows only the prime frequency bands. This is where the most familiar consumer services, such as broadcasting and cell phones, are clustered.

Today the primary constraint on use of the spectrum is not capacity but, rather, how the government manages access to it. In every nation the spectrum, like the atmosphere and navigable waterways, is managed as a publicly owned asset. The Communications Act of 1934 prohibits private ownership of the airwaves and authorizes the Federal Communications Commission to allocate frequencies to various services and to grant temporary licenses consistent with the "public interest, convenience, and necessity." Over the years the prime

frequencies that allow signals to penetrate buildings, trees, and bad weather have all been allocated, exclusively and mostly free of charge, to broadcast TV and radio stations, the military, and a host of industries and services—which now, thanks to digital technologies, actually need only a fraction of that space.

The problem is that the government's seventy-six-year-old allocation system—based on zero-cost licensing and a zoning system that allocates access according to service—gives current users no incentive to relinquish frequencies, or to use their portion of the spectrum more efficiently. Regulators rigidly define—and freeze in place, often for decades—the precise frequencies an industry may use, and for what purpose. This system can hobble new industries. Although cell-phone companies, for example, are desperate for additional frequencies, licenses are simply not available, at any price. In 1993



Congress mandated auctions to assign new licenses, but it has not given the FCC authority to auction or charge rent for prime portions of the spectrum that have already been licensed. On the contrary, pressured by the broadcasting lobby, in 1996 Congress effectively *doubled* the share of the airwaves licensed at no cost by local TV stations—a giveaway then valued by the FCC at up to \$70 billion, but now worth far more.

A consensus has emerged that spectrum licenses should be traded freely and allow users more flexibility, so that companies can supply whatever services are most profitable. But no consensus has emerged on how to get from here to there. Granting property-like rights to commercial users would make licenses more valuable to those users, but the vexing economic and political question is this: How can the public collect a fair return from politically powerful licensees who were given their share of the spectrum free?

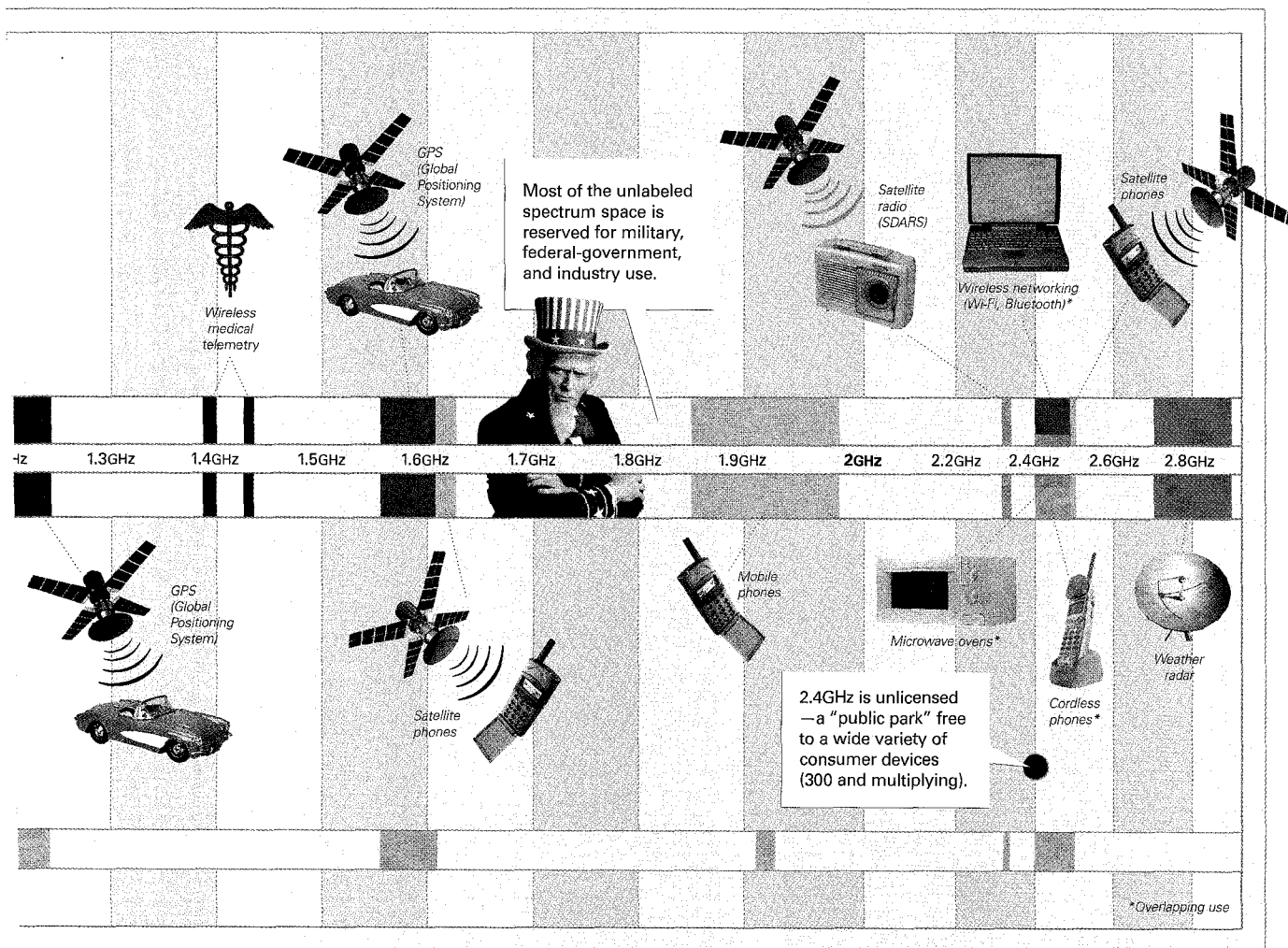
In recent years the FCC has been less concerned with this question than with creating a private market for spectrum access. One possible way of doing so would be to grant commercial users complete and permanent control over the frequencies they now borrow. The FCC is already moving in this direction. Another possibility, popular in Congress, would be to lease frequencies for a fixed period and allow users to provide any service during the term of the lease.

Technology, too, is changing the terms of the debate. The fastest-growing service in telecommunications today is Wi-Fi (for "wireless fidelity"), which enables laptops and other devices to transmit data wirelessly, over unlicensed frequencies, anywhere within a certain area. (Wi-Fi is found at 2.4GHz, where it shares a band—once derided as the "junk" band—with such in-home devices as cordless phones, microwave ovens, and baby monitors.) Unlicensed spectrum is managed like a

public highway: subject to certain rules of the road, access is open, free, and shared. The Wi-Fi boom has to date focused on short-range mobility, but already dozens of entrepreneurs are using unlicensed spectrum to offer high-speed wireless Internet connections over areas up to thirty miles from a connection to the Internet backbone. This is important for rural areas, where high-speed wire connections are often unavailable or unaffordable.

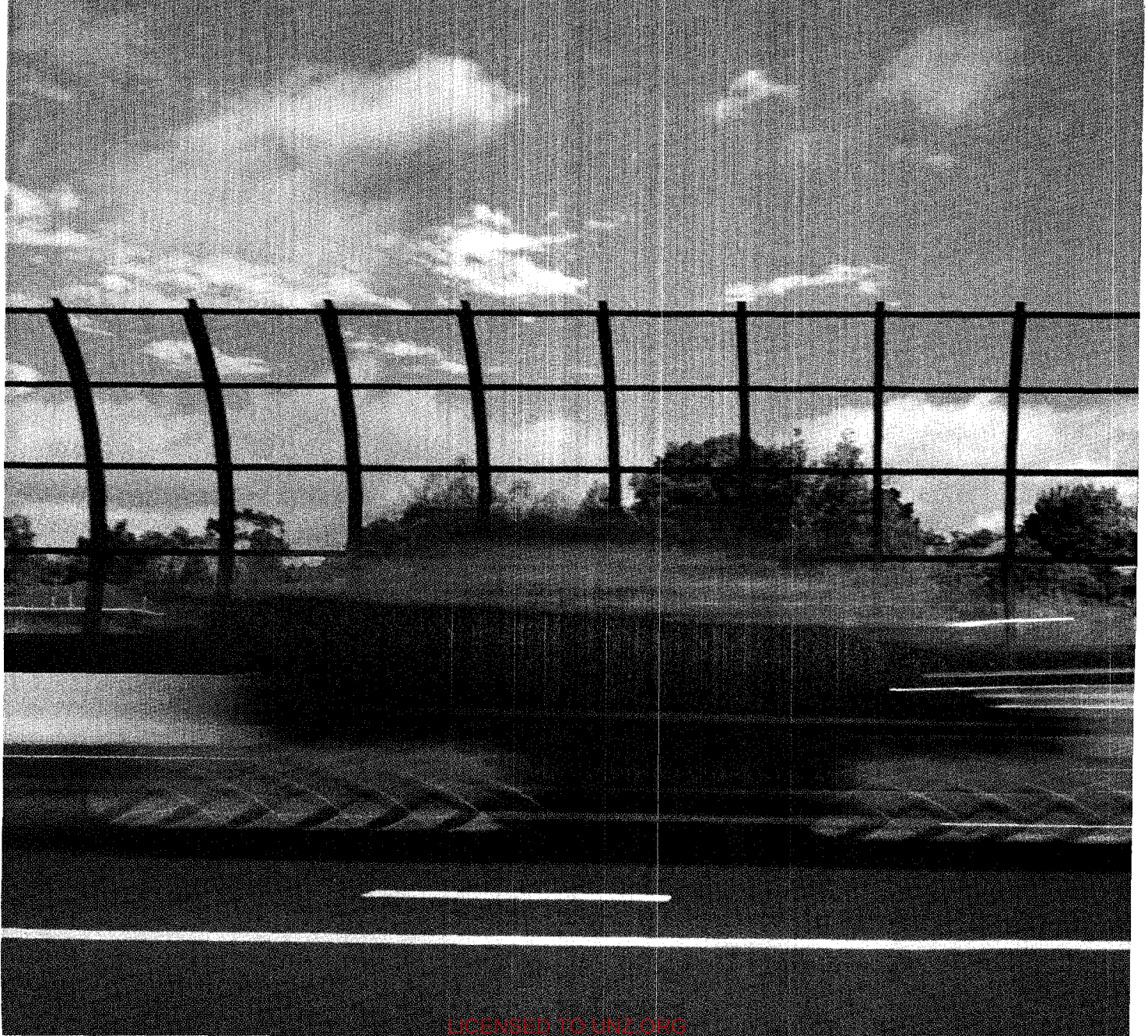
Those who advocate expanding unlicensed access to the airwaves argue that in the near future meshed networks of "smart," frequency-hopping broadband devices will provide Americans with nearly ubiquitous communication at high speed and low cost. But because offering shared access to prime frequencies now licensed for exclusive use would increase competition and reduce the value of licenses, current licensees are already lining up to oppose it.

—MICHAEL CALABRESE AND J. H. SNIDER



A STORY IN PROGRESS

PUTTING THE PEDAL TO THE MICROCHIP.



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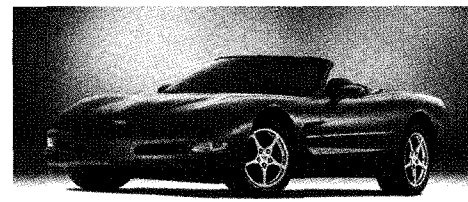
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ANARCHY AT SEA

The sea is a domain increasingly beyond government control, vast and wild, where laws of nations mean little and secretive shipowners do as they please—and where the resilient pathogens of piracy and terrorism flourish

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

Illustrations by Marc Yankus

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Since we live on land, and usually beyond sight of the sea, it is easy to forget that our world is an ocean world, and to ignore what in practice that means. Some shores perhaps can be tamed, but beyond the horizon lies the wave-maker, an anarchic expanse, the open ocean of the high seas. Under its many names, and with variations in color and mood, this single ocean spreads across three fourths of the globe. Geographically it is not the exception to our world but by far its greatest defining feature. By social measures it is important too. At a time when every last patch of land is claimed by one government or another, and when citizenship is treated as an absolute condition of human existence, it is a place that remains radically free. Expressing that freedom are more than 40,000 large merchant ships that ply the open ocean, among uncountable numbers of smaller coastal craft, and between them carry nearly the full weight of international trade—almost all the

raw materials and finished products on which our lives are built. These ships are crewed by mariners of varying quality drawn from the poor worldwide, and mixed together without reference to language or nationality. In many cases they are owned or managed by secretive one-ship companies so ghostly and unencumbered that they exist only on paper, or maybe as a brass plate on some faraway foreign door. But it is the ships themselves that truly embody the anarchy of the open ocean: they are possibly the most independent objects on earth, many of them without allegiances of any kind, frequently changing their identity, and assuming whatever nationality, or “flag,” allows them to sail as they please.

No one pretends that a ship comes from the home port painted on its stern, or that it has ever been anywhere near. Panama is the largest maritime nation on earth, and is followed by bloody Liberia, which hardly exists. No coastline is required either. There are ships that hail from La Paz,



in landlocked Bolivia. There are ships that hail from the Mongolian desert. The registries themselves are rarely based in the countries whose name they carry: Panama is considered to be an old-fashioned “flag,” because its consulates collect the registration fees, but “Liberia” is run by a company in Virginia, “Cambodia” by another in South Korea, and the proud “Bahamas” by a group in the City of London. The system, generally known as “flags of convenience,” began around World War II, but its big expansion occurred only in the 1990s—and in direct reaction to an international attempt to impose controls. By shopping globally, shipowners found that they could *choose* the laws that were applied to them rather than haplessly submitting as ordinary citizens must to the arbitrary jurisdictions of their native states. The effect was to lower operating costs—for crews and upkeep—and to limit the financial consequences of the occasional foundering or loss of a ship. The advantages were so great that even the most conservative and well-established shipowners, who were perhaps not naturally inclined to play along, found that they had no choice but to do so. What’s more, because of the registration fees that the shipowners could offer to cash-strapped governments, the various flags competed for the business, and the deals kept getting better.

The resulting arrangement, though deeply subversive, has an undeniably elegant design. It constitutes an exact reversal of sovereignty’s intent, and a perfect mockery of national conceits. It is free enterprise at its freest. And it is by no means always a bad thing. I’ve been told, for example, that the cost of transporting tea to England has fallen a hundredfold since the days of sail, and that there are similar efficiencies across the board. But the efficiencies are accompanied by global problems, too, including the playing

of the poor against the poor, the persistence of huge fleets of dangerous ships, the pollution they cause, the implicit disposability of the crews who work aboard, and the parallel growth of two particularly resilient pathogens that exist now on the ocean—the first being a modern and sophisticated strain of piracy, and the second its politicized cousin, the maritime form of the new stateless terrorism.

These patterns are strong in part because they fit so well with certain unchanging realities of the sea—the ocean’s easy disregard for human constructs, its size, the terrible strength of its storms, and the privacy provided by its horizons. They are not, however, vestiges of a swashbuckling past—though maritime traditions are involved—but rather seem to be rooted in a new and particularly calculated form of chaos. Though the morals and motivations are not the same, there are striking similarities between the methods of shipowners, al Qaeda-style terrorists, and certain pirate groups—all of whom have learned to operate without the need for a home base and, more significantly, to escape the forces of law and order not by running away but by complying with existing laws and regulations in order to hide in plain sight. The result has been to place the oceans increasingly beyond government control. For public consumption in cities like London and Washington, D.C., there are still brave words about the promise of technology and the taming of the sea. Privately, though, the officials who are charged with doing the work—whether imposing navigational and safety standards on ships, or fighting seaborne terrorism and criminality—now admit that unlike land or air, the sea is a domain that can barely be policed. This is neither a lament nor a forecast of doom, but a close observation of the ocean in our time. The ocean is our world, and it is wild.

I. A SEA STORY

The *Kristal* was a typical casualty of the anarchic sea. It was an all-purpose tanker, a steel behemoth 560 feet long. It had been built in Italy in 1974, and for years had ridden the downward spiral of the maritime market under a progression of names, owners, and nationalities. By the winter of 2001, at the age of twenty-seven, it was nominally Maltese. The ship belonged to an obscure Italian family who owned it through a Maltese company that existed only on paper, and that operated through several layers of other companies, variously of Switzerland and Monaco.

Though the *Kristal* was well painted, and regularly passed inspections, it was at least five years beyond the ideal retirement age, and had grown decrepit and difficult to maintain. Its owners kept it sailing anyway, apparently with the intention of squeezing a final few years of profitability from the ship before selling it to other operators still lower down the food chain or, if none could be found, directly to a shipbreaker for the scrap-metal value of the hull. They were unable to attract business from the major oil companies, most of which try to apply stringent standards to the tankers they charter and generally shy away from vessels past the age of twenty, but there were other customers and cargoes available. Throughout the previous year the *Kristal* had engaged in a globe-circling trade, by which it carried molasses from India to Western Europe, kerosene from Latvia to Argentina, and soy oil from Argentina around Cape Horn to India again. The molasses was a sign of the *Kristal*'s final decline: it is the product left over from refined sugar, a cargo carried on the cheap by ships that tend to be one step removed from the grave. There is little risk to the principals involved—the customers and shipping companies—because the hulls and cargoes are insured, and in the event of an accident and a spill, molasses disperses easily and disappears without causing much trouble. It is no small matter in choosing a ship that the same is true of Third World crews.

The *Kristal*'s customer in February of 2001 was a subsidiary of the big British sugar company Tate & Lyle, which had contracted with the ship's owners to bring a full, heavy load of 28,000 tons of molasses from two ports on the west coast of India to an as yet unspecified European destination, which would be decided en route on the basis of the market. The crew consisted of thirty-five men of various nationalities, mostly Pakistani—about ten men more than usual for a ship of this type, because they would need to carry out repairs while under way. Most of the repairs consisted of chipping away at rust that, under the paint, spread like a cancer across the main deck and through the hull; there is evidence that important welding was also being done. The crew knew about the *Kristal*'s condition, but were glad for their jobs. The captain was a forty-three-year-old Croatian named Allen Marin—one of many such officers from formerly Communist states, who are known to be competent

and able to live on low salaries. He was well liked by his subordinates, though some thought that he seemed strangely uninterested in the technical aspects of running the ship. It was noticed, for instance, that during the important final loading of the molasses in India, he and the chief mate, another Croatian, went ashore overnight, leaving supervision of the work to a junior officer. No one objected. The attitude was to let the captain have his fun. The *Kristal* was a run-down ship, but a fairly happy one.

On February 4, 2001, it set out across the Indian Ocean on a route that would go through the Suez Canal and the Strait of Gibraltar. The days passed in monotonous succession, broken by the routine of alternating six-hour watches, the anticipation of work and of rest. During their time off the men ate and slept, and relaxed by playing ping-pong or watching movies in the messrooms. They called the superstructure where they lived the "iron house," because it was made of metal and hemmed them in. It stood aft on the hull, and rose five levels above the main deck to the bridge. It was not uncomfortable, but after a while it seemed small. The crew's conversations there were almost exclusively about the ship, because after many months together it provided all that was left to be said.

The Indian Ocean was calm. Word came that the destination would be Amsterdam. There was a period of concern partway to the Red Sea, when a portion of the deck suddenly bulged upward, breaking some welds. Captain Marin reported the problem to the management company, and received a private reply, presumably to carry on. Only one crewman expressed grave concern. He was one of three Spaniards on board, a bearish, bearded forty-one-year-old pumpman named Juan Carlos Infante Casas, who despite his enormous physical strength had a reputation as a worrier. Infante Casas's duties included operating the valves and cargo pumps, and sounding the tanks from overhead on the deck. Like the other Spaniards, both of whom were mechanics, he came from Galicia, along La Costa del Morte, Spain's western Atlantic shore. He had gone to sea out of restlessness as a young man, and had never married, and still lived with his mother, to whom he was close. After six months aboard now, he was looking forward to leaving the ship just a few days ahead, at a scheduled fueling stop and partial crew change in Gibraltar. In messroom conversation he said that he knew the *Kristal* too well to trust it on the winter Atlantic. The other Spaniards felt more equable, though they, too, were scheduled to leave at Gibraltar. The older of them was a lean, graying man, nearly sixty, named José Manuel Castineiras, who said that he neither regretted nor enjoyed his life at sea but considered it to be his destiny. It was easier for him than for his friend Infante Casas, therefore, when word came after the *Kristal* passed through the Suez Canal that the stop in Gibraltar had been eliminated: the ship would fuel instead at Ceuta, on the Moroccan side of the strait, and the crew change would be delayed until Amsterdam. That, too, was destiny.

The passage through the Mediterranean was uneventful. To keep to schedule, Captain Marin maintained the full engine speed of 88 rpm, driving the heavy ship westward at 11 knots through six-foot waves that were typically steep for that sea. The hull shuddered sometimes, but it barely pitched, and it rolled side-to-side by only 5 degrees—not enough even to spill coffee. Spray wetted the forward deck. The crew chipped rust. Life in the iron house continued normally.

The *Kristal* arrived at Ceuta on February 24. A storm was forecast for the Atlantic ahead, along the Portuguese and Spanish coasts, and gale warnings were in effect farther to the north, for the Bay of Biscay. Marin ordered 400 tons of bunker fuel, enough for another twelve days. While the ship took on the fuel, Juan Carlos Infante Casas went ashore and called his mother. When she answered the phone, he said, “*Hola España!*” which is what he always said. He told her that he was calling from Ceuta, and that his return to Galicia had been delayed. He said he was worried about the ship. He asked about the weather in Galicia. His mother reported that it was very nice.

But her view was limited, as land views are, to the orderly little neighborhood that surrounded her, and to the sky immediately overhead. At most she might have seen on television a simplified prediction that tomorrow the sun would hide behind clouds. While fueling in Ceuta, Captain Marin had access to more-sophisticated forecasts, as well as to reports of troubles existing ahead—there were ships out there having a hard go of it off Spain and France. In earlier times he might have been expected to go gently on his aging ship, and to wait in port until the weather had passed. But on the modern free-market sea, where profit margins are slim, delays of even a few hours seem unacceptably costly, and a captain who develops a reputation for timidity will soon find that someone has taken his place. As soon as the fueling was finished, Captain Marin ordered the ship to get under way, and in the last hours before midnight of February 24 he sent the *Kristal* sailing fast past Gibraltar and on into the Atlantic night.

At once the ride grew rough. The swells at first were about twelve feet high, black masses more felt than seen, through which the ship bashed and rolled. The conditions as of yet were not worrisome: the local winds remained light, and in technical terms the sea state seemed to be only about Force 5, on a scale of twelve. Nonetheless, the swells were evidence of a significant disturbance ahead, and the barometer was falling, and it was clear that worse was yet to come. Captain Marin maintained full engine speed. The weather's resistance slowed the ship

by about two knots as it fought northwestward to round the Cape of São Vicente, on the Portuguese coast.

At 2:00 A.M. a twenty-five-year-old Pakistani deck cadet named Naeem Uddin joined the officers on the bridge to begin his regular six-hour watch. Uddin was a tall, docile man who had grown up in northern Pakistan, on the border with China, as the son of a security guard. Under the mistaken impression that the merchant marine would provide some of the discipline and pride of a naval career, he had trained to become a deck officer at an academy in Karachi. After three years aboard working ships he knew better now, but with debts piled up behind him, and only three months of required sea time remaining before he would qualify for his first license, he felt committed to the life. To make the best of it, he provided the discipline for himself, working hard without complaint and never commenting on the wisdom of his superiors. He was not, however, without judgment. When Uddin came onto the bridge, the second officer, whose watch it was, told him that the autopilot was being overwhelmed,

and that he should take the helm and steer. This was one of Uddin's standard duties, and of course he complied, carefully holding the headings as commanded, but not without wondering, as the hours went by, whether there wasn't some better way to handle the coming storm than busting straight through.

Steadily over the next two days the weather grew worse. The *Kristal* struggled northward in the open ocean off the Portuguese coast, headed for a point abeam Spain's

Cape Finisterre, where it would be able to turn slightly eastward and take a straight line across the outer Bay of Biscay for the entrance to the English Channel. The sea was so rough that all work on the deck had stopped. Sleep was difficult, movie watching nauseating, ping-pong a dangerous contact sport. Ships coming from the north warned of still rougher stuff ahead.

By late afternoon on February 26 the *Kristal* was offshore of Galicia, in the vicinity of Cape Finisterre, and conditions by any standard had grown severe. The sea state by now was at least Force 9. To the men on the bridge, the ocean seemed to be coming apart. The wind was howling out of the north, and there was a constant roar of crashing water. Sheets of heavy spray rose to smash against the bridge's wings. The waves were steep and breaking, and as high as thirty feet. They regularly buried the bow, and sometimes swept across the entire deck, engulfing the ship to the superstructure and filling the aft passageways faster than they could drain. The view from a ship of such conditions is in some ways a privileged one—a rare display of the ocean's awesome power that may seem exhilarating even to a crew

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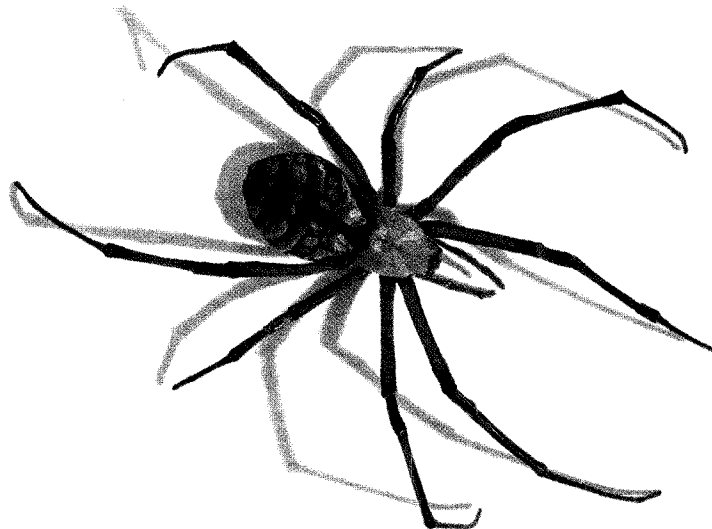
engaged in the fight for survival. There is a home video of a violent storm in the Mediterranean off Spain that was shot in December of 2000 from the bridge of a Greek-owned gasoline tanker named the *Castor*, in which waves are seen burying the deck, and in the background the Polish crew can be heard laughing and whooping with delight. That crew proved foolish, because the *Castor* then cracked severely and, threatening at any moment to sink or explode, embarked on what became an epic voyage under tow as a "leper ship" that for six weeks was refused entry by every port of refuge. Nonetheless, there is no denying the abstract beauty of a heavy storm at sea.

But the crew of the *Kristal* knew their ship too well to indulge in abstraction. At 2:00 A.M., when Naeem Uddin entered the bridge for his watch, he found not only the scheduled second officer on duty there but the chief mate and the third officer as well, both of whom had stayed on past the end of their normal watches. To Uddin they looked afraid, as was he. The blackness of the night was streaked with the white of breaking waves. The ship was rolling and pitching violently. Through the spinning clear-screens on the bridge's windows he could see the familiar bow light moving wildly as the ship plunged deeply into oncoming waves. It was just possible to make out the masses of water boiling across the deck. When Uddin took the helm, he found the ship difficult to steer. It was hogging over the crests,

surfing down the watery slopes, sagging and staggering through the troughs, and slewing left and right by 20 degrees. There was no chance of keeping the *Kristal* exactly on heading. Uddin fought back with large rudder movements, trying to average the swings.

It was not Uddin's first experience with the *Kristal* in a storm. The previous winter he had steered through similar waves while bound for Ireland with another load of molasses, and he had watched the ship rolling to 25 degrees, which was uncomfortably close to the capsizing threshold. On that occasion, however, the captain had been another man, a Spaniard, who had ordered Uddin to turn the *Kristal* into the waves and slow it to its minimum maneuvering speed, easing the ship's motion at the cost of a delay. This time, in contrast, the captain was below in his cabin, and probably asleep. Captain Marin had stood duty on the bridge for much of the time since leaving Ceuta, and undoubtedly he needed to rest. Meanwhile, the helm's instrumentation showed that the engine speed was still set at the full 88 rpm—as if before retiring the captain had given an order to maintain speed at all costs. Uddin was always aware of his low rank as a cadet, and he continued to steer without comment, but this ride felt more dangerous to him than any that had come before. Though the *Kristal* was rolling less steeply than it had during the previous year's storm, initially to only about 15 degrees, it was shaking, slamming, and

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pitching severely through the waves. From the changes in vibration it seemed that the propeller at times was cavitating, or perhaps coming partially out of the water. In combination the motions were complex. The ship would roll three or four times, bury its bow, and while struggling upward oscillate more rapidly. Uddin realized that enormous strains were being placed on a weak and rusty hull.

The officers on the bridge realized it too. They were openly anxious about the ship's fate, and repeatedly asked each other, "What's going to happen? What should we do?" The second officer radioed another vessel that was out that night, running downwind from the north. He asked about the ocean ahead. The answer came back that it was very, *very* rough, with really high seas—meaning worse even than these. The chief mate and the second officer discussed running for shelter on the Spanish or Portuguese coast, but perhaps because this would have involved gambling with a dangerous lee shore, they did not pursue the idea. On several occasions when the slamming grew most intense the chief mate asked Uddin to alter the course off-wind, 10 or 20 degrees to the west, but each time the rolling grew so severe that he hastily remanded the order and had the ship brought back to face the storm. The best compromise seemed to lie among compass headings slightly to the left of the weather, by which the ship took the waves on the starboard bow. It wasn't much of a solution. The *Kristal*

continued to pitch and slam, and at the extremes rolled past 25 degrees, making it impossible for the officers to stand without holding on, and causing loose objects in the bridge to crash. Significantly, the chief mate did not rouse the captain, or take it upon himself to break the schedule and reduce the engine speed.

Uddin's watch was shortened that night in recognition of the fight he had put up to maintain control. He went below before dawn, had a cold meal, and retreated to his cabin to rest. His cabin was on the galley deck, at mid-level in the superstructure, overlooking the main deck and, beyond it, the bow. It had a bunk, a cabinet with drawers, and a porthole covered by a curtain. Uddin undressed, put on nightclothes, and lay in his bunk as usual with his head toward the bow and his feet toward the back of the boat. By wedging himself against the bunk's preventer-board he managed to sleep.

Uddin woke up to a series of severe jerks, accompanied by the crash of crockery in the galley and the shouts of men. It was 12:30 in the afternoon. He felt groggy and disoriented, and assumed at first that the weather had turned worse, and that the ship must have rolled even more heavily than before. But then he noticed that his feet were higher than his head, and indeed that the floor of the cabin was steeply slanted. The engine had

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stopped; there were no vibrations; Uddin heard the splashing of water. He scrambled out of the bunk, went to the porthole, and drew aside the curtain. The scene outside sent a jolt of terror through him: the *Kristal*'s hull had broken nearly in two from below, and had folded down at the midpoint into a V that was awash and flexing, hanging together merely by the skin of the deck. The ship was dead in the water. Storm waves surged through the breach.

It was a confusing time aboard the *Kristal*. The men on duty up on the bridge saw a cloud of steam rising from rupturing pipes as the break occurred. Some of the crew later said that the Spanish pumpman Juan Carlos Infante Casas was on a catwalk directly above the break, despite the conditions at the time, and that he ran for his life up-slope toward the superstructure, barely keeping ahead of the advancing water. His friend, the lean, graying mechanic José Manuel Castineiras, was in the messroom, finishing a lunch of chicken and soup, when he felt a shock and heard the ship rupture. It made a sharp crack like a cannon shot, and within seconds the deck pitched down. He rushed outside onto a passageway, and clambered hand over hand up a stairway to the deck above, where he and other crewmen broke out life jackets and put them on. The general alarm rang. Without further encouragement they began to gather at the assigned muster stations, and prepared to abandon ship.

Later it was pointed out that even mortally wounded tankers tend to float for a while, that molasses doesn't burn, and that there was no need for such a hurry; the old adage was mentioned that sailors should only step *up* into a lifeboat—meaning as a desperate last resort. But let us be honest. This crew was not sitting in some office thinking back on an event but, rather, enduring the chaos of the ocean in real time, clustered on the tilted deck of a broken hull in a ferocious winter storm, and facing the close prospect of death. The air temperature was 39°, and the water was only slightly warmer. The *Kristal* was equipped with an inflatable life raft in a canister and two open lifeboats on davits, one on each side. Had the stern suddenly sunk, it would have tangled the lines, dragged the lifeboats down, and possibly taken the raft as well. It is regrettable that many of the men panicked, and that some had not dressed beyond the shorts and T-shirts that they happened to have had on. But it is also understandable that they hastily lowered the lifeboats to the level of their deck and began to climb in. Captain Marin and the chief mate had been dining in the officers' messroom when the accident occurred, and they quickly climbed to the bridge. Marin got on the radio and broadcast the first emergency call.

In his cabin, braced against the sloping floor, Naeem Uddin donned a heavy sweater over his nightclothes, put on fresh coveralls and shoes, and strapped himself tightly into a life jacket. Oddly, he heard no alarms, and instead was impressed by the silence of the dying ship—a quiet broken only by the crash of objects continuing to fall and the rhythmic banging of his door, which had popped open and was swinging with the ship's rolls. He staggered down the deserted hallway, went through a watertight door, and pushed into the roar of the storm outside. Perhaps ten minutes had passed since the breakup. He was the last man to arrive at the port-side muster station, which was on the leeward side of the ship.

By the time he got there, the port lifeboat was hanging just outboard of the deck, and twenty-two of the crew had already climbed aboard. The Croatian chief engineer was there, as were all three Spaniards and a large number of ordinary Pakistani sailors. Uddin saw two higher-ranking Pakistanis standing on the deck beside the boat—including

The tanker's hull had broken nearly in two, and had folded at the midpoint into a V that was awash and flexing, hanging together merely by the skin of the deck. Storm waves surged through the breach.

the third officer who had been on the bridge the night before, and who now held a crew list and was checking off names. That third officer was Kenneth Romal, a Karachi native not quite twenty-eight. He was listening to shouted instructions and reassurances from Captain Marin, who stood two levels higher, on the port bridge wing. The men in the lifeboat were silent. Uddin climbed into the bow of the lifeboat, which because of the ship's angle was pointed slightly down. He noticed

that the water below was thick with molasses, and that the spilled cargo was calming the waves.

Third Officer Romal had a handheld radio with which he could communicate with Captain Marin. Romal climbed in and sat in the stern of the lifeboat, at the helm. After another ten minutes the captain gave the order to abandon ship, and the chief mate, standing one deck higher, used a brake arrangement to ease the port lifeboat into the water. There were twenty-five men aboard. They unshackled the boat from the cables, started the small diesel engine, and drifted clear of the ship. From the bridge wing the captain radioed for them to stand by in case of difficulties as, next, the chief mate lowered the starboard lifeboat, with an additional eight men aboard. It rapidly faded into the storm and disappeared from view.

Captain Marin and the chief mate were alone now on the ship. Some in the port lifeboat argued for returning to try to pick them up, but the captain insisted by radio that the ship was about to sink, and that they should steer clear. It was an extraordinarily brave gesture—a private display of honor by a man who must have known that his own

captains ashore, those shadowy companies whose schedules he had so dutifully served, would never have taken such risks for him. For the moment, at least, this did not seem to matter. He and the first mate checked the ship for stragglers, deployed the life raft, jumped down into it, and floated free.

Aboard the port lifeboat the crew had already lost sight of the *Kristal*. The suddenness with which they found themselves alone was almost as frightening as the facts that faced them. They had no idea of their destination, or even if their plight was known. Third Officer Romal was steering skillfully. But they were twenty-five sailors without survival suits on a bitterly cold ocean, moving among mountainous seas in a small open boat, battered by wind and spray. They veered between roaring breakers any of which could have rolled or swamped their fragile vessel. Sitting at the bow with the masses of water hissing and rearing overhead, Uddin tried and failed to estimate the size of the waves. They were later said to be thirty feet high—a clinical measure that does not convey the sea's true dimensions for the *Kristal*'s terrified castaways. Romal kept cautioning the men to stay calm, but with limited success. Uddin and several others remained functional. But one man was seasick and vomiting, and many of the others were seized by a dangerously unreasoned, animalistic craving to survive.

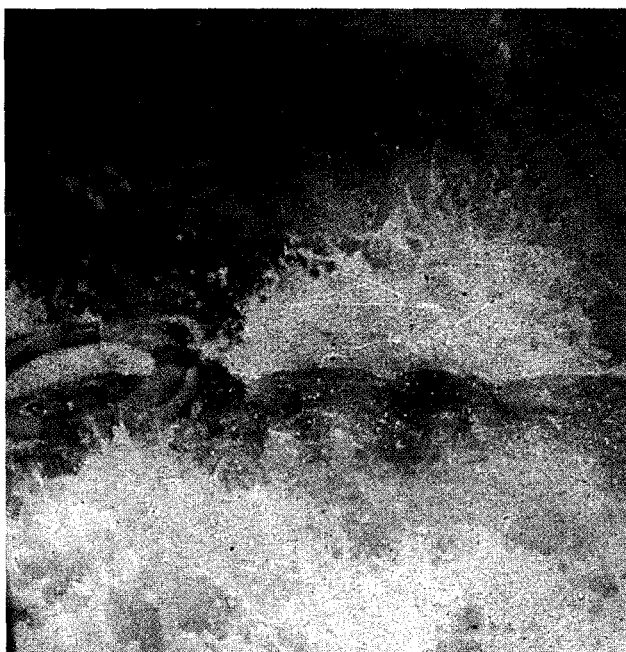
Romal was able to maintain control for a while, but the storm pressed in relentlessly, and did not allow his men the space to collect their minds.

It is useful to remember the reductive effect that fear has on thoughts and reactions: whether during shipwrecks or in other disasters, a sort of tunnel vision may set in and narrow people's views. There is another story that comes to mind. It took place three years before the *Kristal*'s demise, on a similarly old and rusty ship named the *Flare*, which set off from Rotterdam on a stormy winter crossing to Montreal. The *Flare* was a dry-bulk carrier, flagged in Cyprus, and it had a multinational crew of twenty-five. The voyage was extremely rough, with waves exceeding fifty feet. For two weeks the *Flare* slammed and whipped, flexing so wildly that, according to one survivor, the deck cranes appeared at times to be touching. As it was approaching the Canadian coast late one night, the *Flare* broke cleanly in two. The entire crew was on the stern section, which listed to the

side and began to sink. Strangely, the engine continued to turn, slowly driving the hulk on an erratic course through the night. The crew managed to launch one lifeboat, but it broke away before anyone could climb aboard. The men were panicked, and ultimately twenty-one of them died. But before the end on the sinking stern, there was a moment of savage euphoria when a ship floating in the opposite direction suddenly loomed out of the darkness ahead, as if it were coming to rescue them. The terrified men cheered. To their horror they then saw the name FLARE written on the side. It was of course their own detached bow section, and it passed them by.

Something similar happened to the crew in the *Kristal*'s port lifeboat: they never saw the *Kristal* again, but at the top of a wave Uddin spotted another ship coming toward them; the men responded euphorically, and immediately allowed

tunnel vision to set in, with only one goal in view, which was the salvation to be found on that ship's deck. Apparently they gave no thought to the difficulty of climbing a ship's sides in such seas, and never discussed the possibility of waiting for helicopters and rescue divers, which could quickly have been brought into play. Third Officer Romal seemed to be as single-minded as the others: he headed the life-boat at full speed for the ship, while the excited men fired off rocket flares. On the handheld radio Romal began broadcasting,



"Mayday! Mayday! This is *Kristal Lifeboat Number One*, with twenty-five men on board!" He repeated this several times until the ship answered. It took twenty minutes to close the distance.

The rescuer was a Panamanian-flagged gas carrier named the *Tarquin Dell*, with a Filipino captain and crew. Gas carriers are high-sided vessels, and this one was particularly so, with a deck about thirty feet above the waterline, because it was riding empty. For the same reason, the *Tarquin Dell* was difficult to maneuver in the storm, and prone to heavy rolling. The captain managed to turn it beam-on to the waves in an attempt to shelter the waters on the downwind side. The lifeboat circled around the stern and tucked in close against the ship's hull. Far above, on the *Tarquin Dell*'s deck, sailors in life jackets stood along the railing, holding on against 30-degree rolls, and attempting to lower light "heaving lines" to which the lifeboat's bow and stern lines might be secured. This proved almost impossible



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TODAY TOMORROW

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to accomplish; the *Tarquin Dell*'s sailors were trying to tie one-handed knots on a rolling deck, and the few lines that they did secure broke. They kept at it. The situation in the lifeboat was nearly uncontrollable. Many of the crewmen were crying and shouting, and the boat was brutally slamming against the ship's unyielding hull. At the bow, Uddin broke a boathook while fending off, and then continued to work with the stub. The storm waves seemed to be undiminished by the *Tarquin Dell*'s mass. One of them rose so high that it came to within a foot of simply depositing the lifeboat on the ship's deck. But then the boat dropped away, and the final line broke. The boat started drifting rapidly forward, and the *Tarquin Dell*'s crew ran along with it, until one of them heaved a heavy "messenger line" into the center of the crowd below.

At that point things went very wrong. Rather than securing the line to prevent further drift, a cluster of desperate men grabbed it, each higher than the other, until very quickly they were standing, half hanging from the line, and unbalancing the lifeboat. For the last time Third Officer Romal shouted desperately, "Sit down! *Calm* down!" But then a large wave broke over the boat, and the boat swamped and tilted, and all but one man, who was sitting toward the stern, were washed into the Atlantic Ocean.

Despite their life jackets, most seem to have gone deep. The gray-haired Spaniard José Manuel Castineiras felt the tangle of flailing legs and arms as he fought his way back to the surface. When he emerged, he saw that the lifeboat was flooded and floating low in the water, and that the man who had not washed out was still sitting upright in place, but that he was dead. He was a Pakistani "galley boy," fifty-some years old, and the first of the *Kristal*'s crewmen to die. Castineiras swam to the lifeboat and somehow crawled in. Several others followed. The *Tarquin Dell* had pivoted in the wind and drifted some distance away, and it was no longer providing protection from the storm. Rolling heavily, it began a series of difficult maneuvers to set itself up for another try.

When Naeem Uddin was washed out of the lifeboat, he heard the screams of others before the ocean closed over his head. Time then slowed for him. He felt himself sinking as his life jacket started sliding up his chest, because, astoundingly, like other life jackets provided by the *Kristal*, it was not equipped with a crotch strap. He grabbed the life jacket with both hands before it escaped over his shoulders, and he rode it to the surface. When his head emerged from the water, he found himself in a wilderness of waves, with neither the ship nor the lifeboat in sight. Three other

crewmen floated within view, including the burly, black-bearded pumpman, Infante Casas.

The ocean was shockingly cold. Eventually, from the top of a large wave, Uddin spotted the lifeboat and in the background the *Tarquin Dell*. Holding his life jacket to his chest with one hand, he began to swim. He had on his nightclothes, his heavy sweater, his coveralls, and his shoes. He used an improvised sidestroke and, because of the life jacket, stayed mostly on his back. This meant that when occasionally he caught sight of the lifeboat, it appeared upside down and above his head. He navigated by those sightings. He swam for fifteen minutes or more, past crewmen floating helplessly. At times he cried. He knew he was going to die, and he wondered what it would be like, if he would feel pain. The cold water had hurt him at first, but it no longer did. He had visions of his mother, his father, his sister, his brothers. He recited a Muslim prayer in preparation for the end. He said, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the last prophet of God." When he

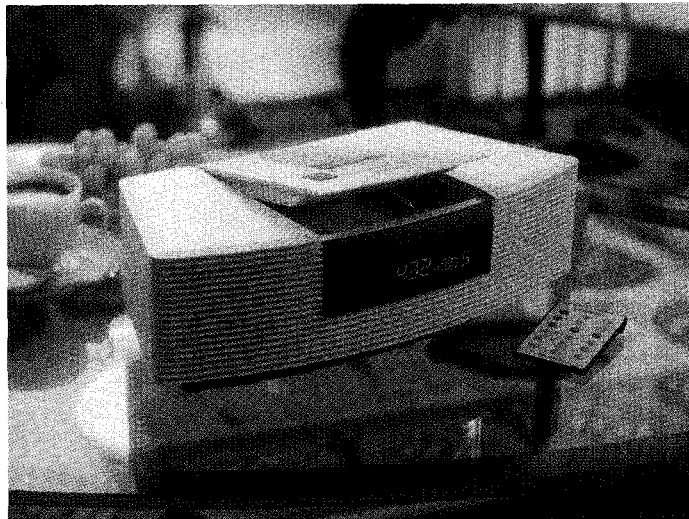
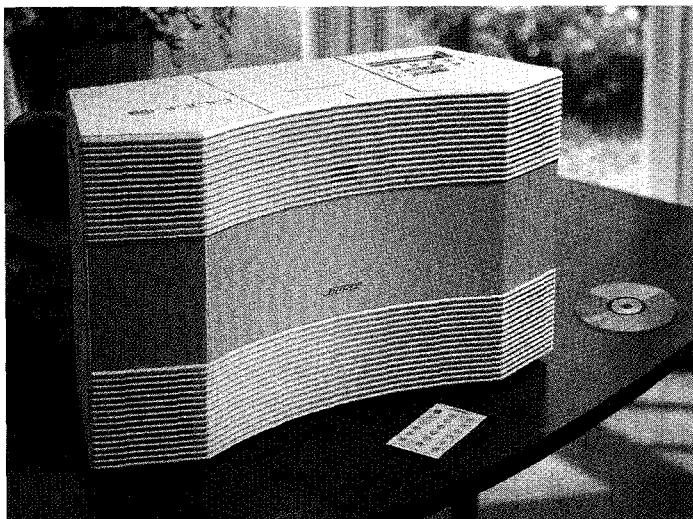
got to the lifeboat, he noticed that it was riding nose-high in the water because there were five men in it, including Castineiras and the dead galley boy, and they were all sitting at the stern. Uddin tried to crawl aboard, and was surprised to find that he lacked the strength. He hung onto a rope until he found a way to drape himself over the lifeboat's gunwale and roll in.

Later another Pakistani sailor arrived, and Uddin helped him aboard. They sat toward the bow for

balance. The waves were relentless. There were now seven people in the lifeboat, and eighteen in the water, mostly out of sight. The *Tarquin Dell* was back in action, providing its limited lee shelter, and with an innovation: a heavy rope strung in a loop from bow to stern, to which the men in the water could cling, and the lifeboat could be attached. But the situation was grim. Uddin and Castineiras both saw dead bodies floating nearby. For the men still alive, the *Tarquin Dell*'s sailors threw life rings into the water, and dangled ropes and a rope ladder over the side. After a while Infante Casas swam up, holding his life jacket under one arm. Castineiras thought that Infante Casas got into the lifeboat, and Uddin thought that he did not. What is certain is that Infante Casas grabbed a dangling rope with his powerful arm, and that a wave washed over him, and he was gone.

It seemed obvious by now that others were disappearing too. Uddin decided to take matters into his own hands. He slid out of the lifeboat, swam along the *Tarquin Dell*, and despite being slammed repeatedly against the hull, caught the rope ladder and began to climb. The climbing was slow.

The crewman heard screams before the ocean closed over him. When his head emerged from the water, he found himself in a wilderness of waves, with neither the ship nor the lifeboat in sight. The ocean was shockingly cold.



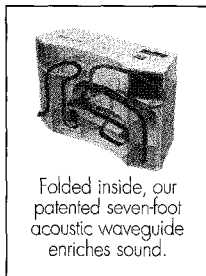
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Uddin's leg was badly cut, and it was warm with blood. The ladder swung violently as the *Tarquin Dell* rolled, and waves continued to clutch at him, sapping what little of his strength remained. About halfway up the side of the ship, bruised and battered and still vulnerable to the ocean's surface, he simply could not move anymore. He did not pray or think of his family then; his mind was empty. He hung on. Vaguely, he felt someone grab his collar from above. It was a strong grip, and he fainted.

When he regained consciousness, a few minutes later, he was lying in a small room along with three other survivors—the only *Kristal* crewmen who ever actually found the sought-for safety of the *Tarquin Dell*'s deck. All of them were blue with cold. Someone gave Uddin a bowl of soup. Someone bandaged his leg. The captain of the *Tarquin Dell* came and said that a helicopter was on the way. Soon afterward, Uddin heard the whacking of its blades.

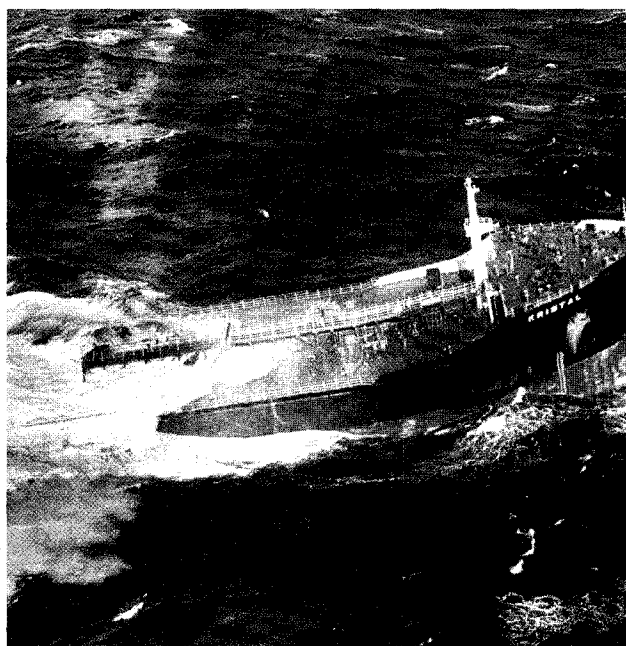
The helicopter was a bulbous Sikorsky, with a rescue diver and a winch. It had come from La Coruña, an old port city on the Galician coast, a half-hour flight away. The pilot was a local star, a man universally known by his first name, Evaristo. He went after five men still loose and alive in the water, winching them up in a double harness, two at a time; then he swung over to the flooded lifeboat

and picked up the survivors there, too. Castineiras was the second to last to leave. By then another helicopter was coming onto the scene. Evaristo flew his load of hypothermic survivors to the hospital in La Coruña. By the time he got there, one of them had gone into cardiac arrest. The sailor was rushed into the emergency room and revived. Evaristo headed immediately back to sea to find the dead and search for the missing. The second helicopter meanwhile had easily retrieved Captain Marin and the *Kristal*'s chief mate from their life raft, and had rescued the eight men in the starboard lifeboat too. Uddin and the three others aboard the *Tarquin Dell* were the last to be plucked from the scene.

In business terms the damage control began within hours. As the crew recovered in La Coruña, at the hospital and at a hotel, the *Kristal*'s managers sent a representative to the city, and employed guards to keep unauthorized visitors away—meaning mainly the press. They hired a crisis-

management public-relations firm in London, issued a terse statement of regret, and endured a few days of national coverage in Spain before the news of the disaster faded away. The survivors were rapidly repatriated to the far points of the globe, and were paid their salaries to the end of their contracts, as the contracts required. The families of the dead were offered lump sums by the *Kristal*'s insurance company, in London. To receive this money, the families first had to sign "quitclaims" promising not to pursue further action. Against the advice of the international seafarers' union, almost all of them signed. The amounts were kept private, and involved commitments to silence, but it is known that most were small, that the payouts varied according to nationality, and that the Spanish got the most, because before they signed the quitclaim they made a little fuss.

The *Kristal* broke entirely in two, and floated for several days until first the bow section sank, and then the stern. As for the human tally, eleven men had died, almost a third of the *Kristal*'s crew. Only four of the bodies were ever retrieved. Among those who were never found was Infante Casas. It seemed poignant and strange that the Spaniard had sailed the world for years, only to die here, off his own Galician shores; when Castineiras left the hospital, it took him less than an hour to make the trip home from La Coruña. But perhaps the saddest loss of all was that of the one sailor who by measure of



his performance should have survived—the young, level-headed Third Officer Romal. After he was swept from the lifeboat, he was never seen again.

II. THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL

The frustration is that a large body of regulations exists to keep such maritime disasters from happening. Most of the regulations are generated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a United Nations agency based in London, which since 1959 has issued a plethora of technical standards covering every aspect of the operation of large ships at sea. The *Kristal* was designed, built, and maintained to full IMO standards, and operated under the well-known maritime authority of a modern democratic state (Malta). It passed both scheduled and spot inspections on a regular basis. It was supervised and approved by the designated agencies, and its safety procedures were formally acknowledged to be in compliance

ILLUSTRATION PHOTO SOURCE: AP/CORBIS

with all the applicable standards. Its crew knew, of course, that the *Kristal* was an unsafe ship, rusting away beneath its paint, harried by its owners, and probably as a result handled recklessly. But when the ship was boarded by official inspectors whose role in principle should have been to intervene, the crew treated the visits as distractions that were mostly irrelevant to their lives. When I finally tracked him down, Naeem Uddin mentioned the crew's attitude toward inspections without any indication that the crew might have made a mistake, though he had suffered the consequences, and even two years after the accident remained visibly traumatized.

The point is, the ocean may look tight in print, much as many failing nations still do by formal description—but the entire structure built to regulate it is something of a fantasy floating free of the realities at sea. The IMO is a typically idealistic construct for bringing order to the world—a democratic assembly of 162 member nations, all of them determinedly equal, who work with the assistance of a technical staff and the consultations of accredited non-governmental groups to establish regulatory packages known as conventions, which the individual member states are then free to adopt (or not) in their sovereign maritime laws. The enforcement of those laws is a separate question, and it is spotty, because the arrangement allows the IMO no enforcement powers of its own. Most of the individual states have neither the expertise nor the inclination to enforce their own official standards, and they rely instead on independent technical organizations known as “classification societies,” which are not hired by the states but, rather, selected and paid for by each ship's owner. The fact that this is a conflict of interest is not allowed to intrude. The IMO has been influential nonetheless, and indeed has become the universal reference for life at sea. Thumbing through the international conventions, hefting the books of regulations, or browsing the logbooks and certificates required to be carried aboard a ship, one might easily conclude that thanks to good government in London, the world of shipping is completely under control. But from the point of view of increasingly disillusioned regulators, the documents that demonstrate compliance are so easy to manipulate that they can be used as a façade behind which groups or companies can do whatever they please.

During the 1990s, even as international regulations multiplied, disorder on the high seas grew dramatically. However, this was not necessarily obvious to officials. They continued to see the ocean in tidy governmental terms as a place subject to civilization, where navies projected national power, and merchant ships sailed however reluctantly under effective IMO controls. It was a view of the world still possible at the end of the twentieth century—an illusion of progress and community that was demolished twenty-one months later.

Since then in the United States many officials have come to regard the ocean with grave concern, believing

that a full-blown maritime attack would make September 11 seem puny by comparison, that such an attack currently poses the most serious threat to national security, and that when the attack comes, it will involve the use of merchant ships. They may well be right. Ships can deliver a big punch, and their importance to world commerce practically ensures that in the reactions that follow, major self-inflicted damage will be done.

Out beyond the horizon there is evidence that al Qaeda and related groups are indeed nautically minded, and have been since well before September 11. On January 3, 2000, al Qaeda and some of its affiliates conspired to ram a fiberglass workboat heavily loaded with explosives against a U.S. destroyer named *The Sullivans* in the Yemeni port of Aden. The attack was aborted after the boat nearly sank under the weight of the explosives. The terrorists learned their lesson. Later that same year, in the same port, they loaded a boat properly and blew a forty-foot hole through the hull of another destroyer, the USS *Cole*. Seventeen sailors were killed, and thirty-nine were wounded. It was early October of 2000—September 11 minus eleven months. In response the U.S. Navy tightened its warships' defenses. Other than that the attack on the *Cole* had little effect. Again, the terrorists appear to have learned a lesson—possibly about the inefficiency of hitting purely military targets, glorious though such targets may be. Two years later another small boat darted out from the Yemeni shores, and it exploded against the *Limburg*, a French super-tanker loaded with crude oil. The ship caught on fire and spilled oil, and one sailor was killed. This time the damage was magnified by increases in insurance costs for ships calling at Yemeni ports and a corresponding drop-off in traffic, as a result of which the Yemeni economy has suffered. True, if the goal was to hit at the West, hurting Yemen hardly constituted a major blow, but the sophistication of the choice to attack a civilian ship was noted with concern around the world, and it spread damage merely by raising the question of what would come next. A cruise ship full of Americans? A European ferry? A tanker in the Strait of Hormuz? A freighter off Gibraltar? Already the navies of the United States and its allies have their hands full with escort duties and patrols. And the ocean is a very big place. With deliberate preparation and the occasional well-placed attack, a few men with small boats can keep the navies churning for years.

But the real concern is not so much the vulnerability of merchant ships as it is their use by terrorist groups. Osama bin Laden is said to own or control up to twenty aging freighters—a fleet sometimes dubbed the “al Qaeda Navy.” To skeptics who wonder why bin Laden would want to own so many of them, the explanation quite simply is that he and his associates are in the shipping business. Given his need for anonymity, this makes perfect sense—and indeed

it reflects as much on the shipping industry as on al Qaeda that the connections remain murky. Such systematic lack of transparency is what worries U.S. officials when they contemplate the sea. The al Qaeda ships are believed to have carried cement and sesame seeds, among other legitimate cargoes. In 1998 one of them delivered the explosives to Africa that were used to bomb the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. But immediately before and afterward it was an ordinary merchant ship, going about ordinary business. As a result, that ship has never been found. Nor have any of the others.

A measure of American frustration was an executive order signed by President Bush in July of 2002, expanding the U.S. Navy's authority to intercept merchant ships on the high seas. The target has always been larger than just the al Qaeda fleet of freighters: the government maintains a watch list of several hundred suspect ships, whose names are constantly being legally changed and painted over to avoid detection, and it recognizes that terrorists, with or without a crew's knowledge, may use almost any kind of ship, from a dhow to a supersized freighter. Therefore the search has been large, and enormously expensive. It has extended through much of the world's ocean and has been carried out by the navies of the United States and its allies. By rough calculation NATO forces so far have intercepted more than 16,000 ships, and they have boarded and searched about 200 of them. For all that, there have been only a few rather

modest successes. For example, after an operation in July of 2002 that involved warships and airplanes from four NATO nations (not including the United States), four suspected al Qaeda operatives were found on a couple of freighters in the Gulf of Oman, and were transferred to a holding pen at the American base in Bagram, Afghanistan. The following month fifteen Pakistani suspects on another ship were captured by the Italians in the Mediterranean, after the ship's captain grew suspicious and turned them in. The ship had been renamed five times in the previous three years, most recently as the *Sara*. It was flagged in Tonga and owned by a Greek, who operated it through a company named Nova Spirit, of Romania and Delaware. American officials said that the company was involved in human smuggling—an allegation that the owner vigorously denied. According to the captain, the Pakistanis had joined the ship in Casablanca, at the owner's insistence. Though they had claimed to be seamen, and had carried seamen's documents, they demonstrated no knowledge of ships, and to a man grew seasick when the *Sara* sailed through a storm. The captain said that they

threatened the crew. If so, as terrorists go they were inept. Because they were found with false passports, large amounts of cash, maps of Italian cities, and unspecified evidence linking them to purported al Qaeda operatives in Europe, they were charged with conspiracy to engage in terrorist acts. Pakistan refuted the charges, and claimed that Italian authorities had bungled the investigation. By this summer the Pakistanis' plight had drawn the attention of human-rights activists. But the men remained under lock and key.

Italy took a softer line in two other encounters. In February of 2002 eight suspected al Qaeda terrorists disembarked from a Nova Spirit ship in Trieste with false documents and ultimately disappeared. A more bizarre case had occurred several months earlier, in October of 2001, when port police in the southern city of Gioia Tauro found a forty-three-year-old Egyptian-born Canadian citizen named Amid Farid Rizk inside a Maersk Sealand container. Rizk is now known to some as "Container Bob." His box

had been loaded in Port Said, Egypt, and was being transferred in Italy to a ship bound for Rotterdam, where it was scheduled to be transferred again, this time for the final destination of Halifax, Nova Scotia. It is said that Rizk was discovered when the Italian police heard him drilling additional ventilation holes. He was a man who apparently liked his comforts. When he emerged, he was clean-shaven, neatly dressed, and obviously well rested. The container was equipped with a bed, a toilet, a

Osama bin Laden is said to control up to twenty aging freighters. The government maintains a watch list of several hundred suspect ships, whose names are constantly being changed to avoid detection.

heater, a water supply, a cell phone, a satellite phone, and a laptop computer. Investigators also found cameras; a valid Canadian passport; maps and security passes for airports in Canada, Thailand, and Egypt; a Canadian aircraft-mechanic certificate; and an airline ticket from Montreal to Cairo, via Rome. The use of containers to gain entry to North America is a well-established trick, part of the vast volume of human smuggling that relies on the far vaster volume of ordinary trade to penetrate the borders. And though the customers willing to transport themselves this way often arrive in very poor shape (indeed, sometimes dead), Cadillac containers like Rizk's have been seen before. Still, Rizk never adequately explained his setup, or why as a Canadian citizen he had not simply flown. Upon his arrest he hired an attorney named Michele Filippo Italiano, whose services I can recommend. Italiano said that Rizk's decision to travel in a container was completely innocent: "He had fallen out with his brother-in-law in Cairo and feared he would be prevented from leaving Egypt." An Italian court released Rizk on bail in November of 2001, at which point he vanished, leaving no trace.

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A more serious threat is posed by the inanimate cargo that containers may hold. The fear on everyone's mind is that a nuclear device, or some other weapon of mass destruction, will pass through a port with little chance of being discovered, and subsequently be ferried with dead-on precision to any target desired. An example of the damage a portside attack could cause is an explosion that occurred in Halifax harbor on December 6, 1917, after a French munitions ship collided with a Norwegian freighter. The French ship caught on fire, drifted to the city's waterfront, and blew up. Witnesses said that the sky erupted with a cubic mile of flame, and that for the blink of an eye the harbor bottom went dry; more than 1,630 buildings were completely destroyed, another 12,000 were damaged, and more than 1,900 people died.

Despite their expanded authority to run intercepts, there is very little that allied navies can do to police container ships. Aboard the transporting ships the containers are stacked tightly and high, and most are impossible to get at. Moreover, speed is the essence of the container business: the ships move fast and on schedule, and any act of interference that did not immediately produce results would raise an outcry not just among shipping companies but among manufacturers and businesses of many sorts in every corner of the world. Without absolutely certain intelligence—there is a specific device, in a specific box, on a specific ship—the navies simply can't get in the way. This leaves NATO, in its hunt for terrorists, probing through the murk among all the other kinds of ships that could carry equally dangerous cargoes. The idea is to keep the pressure on, officials say. They have begun to explain the lack of results as a measure of success.

The truth is that naval patrols hardly matter at all. It's not that they are a bad thing, or might not occasionally turn something up, but that they are national tools best applied against nations, and have little effect against ephemeral gangs on the open ocean. This may be difficult to grasp, because a warship coming over the horizon does instill fear, and the struggle against al Qaeda is too young to make the lack of deterrence clear. But there is longer-standing evidence that can be brought to bear. It is the growth and persistence of a modern form of extra-national piracy that plagues large swaths of the ocean, and has escaped every sea-based effort at control. On a global scale this sort of piracy is more a nuisance than a threat, but it is a significant phenomenon nonetheless, because it requires no base, and it mimics

normal operations where even legitimate ships fly false flags and swap names. Though it is apolitical by nature, it is structurally very similar to the terrorism now faced by government forces.

The pirates involved are ambitious and well organized, and should be distinguished from the larger number of petty opportunists whose presence has always afflicted remote ports and coastlines. The new pirates have emerged on a postmodern ocean where identities have been mixed and blurred, and the rules of nationality have been subverted. Scornful of boundaries, they are organized into multi-ethnic gangs that communicate by satellite and cell phone, and are capable of cynically appraising competing jurisdictions and laws. They choose their targets patiently, and then assemble, strike, and dissipate. They have been known to carry heavy weapons, including shoulder-launched missiles, but they are not determined aggressors, and will back off from stiff resistance, regroup, and find another way. Usually they succeed with only guns and

knives. Box cutters would probably serve them just as well. Their goal in general is to hijack entire ships: they kill or maroon the crews, sell the cargoes, and in the most elaborate schemes turn the hijacked vessels into "phantoms," which pose as legitimate ships, pick up new cargoes, and disappear.

Because of the scope of their ambitions, these gangs are responsible for the theft of much of the cargo stolen on the high seas, though they seem to perpetrate relatively few attacks. Given the murkiness of the world they inhabit, the numbers are difficult to calculate. Of 1,228 pirate attacks reported worldwide from 1998 through 2002, about a fourth were on ships under way, and of those about sixty-eight were major, involving gangs of ten pirates or more. It's safe to assume that some in the gangs were repeat offenders. Among them during the five years in question they hijacked perhaps twenty-five large ships. The violence was not evenly distributed throughout the world. Though piracy posed problems off the coasts of South America, Africa, and the Indian Subcontinent (and occurred in the midst of NATO's sea hunt for al Qaeda), roughly two thirds of the activity was concentrated in just one region—the area of the South China Sea, including the waters of Indonesia and the Philippines. The problem, in other words, would seem finite. Gazing at a map from the confines of land, one might think that with some sea and air patrols, and maybe the "expanded authority" to perform intercepts at sea, order could be imposed. But that authority already exists, and those patrols are being run, and the numbers have only wavered, and order has not come.

The fear is that a nuclear device, or some other weapon of mass destruction, will pass through a port with little chance of being discovered, and be ferried with dead-on precision to any target desired.

III. THE NEW PIRACY

Paradoxically, the place in the region that ought to be the easiest to police is in fact the one most plagued by piracy. It is the Strait of Malacca, a narrow waterway roughly 550 miles long, flanked by tidy Singapore and Malaysia on one side, and chaotic Indonesia on the other. Because it provides a shortcut between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, as many as several hundred ships pass through it every day—most of them under great pressure to save time. Merchant crews understand the dangers there, and they try to post additional lookouts when sailing through. On some ships they even train to repel boarders, and to fight them with high-pressure fire hoses if they reach the deck. But crews are often shorthanded, and they may be too overworked to bother with training exercises of any kind beyond the minimal safety drills, and too tired to stand careful guard.

The latter appears to have been true on the *Alondra Rainbow*. It was a nearly new 370-foot general-cargo vessel owned by a one-ship company in Japan through a subsidiary in Panama, where it was registered. From bow to stern it was a trim and functional ship. The bottom was red, the sides dark blue, the cranes and derrick beige, the superstructure white. The funnel was painted in broad stripes—blue, white, red, white, and blue again. The stripes were an affectionate touch. The *Alondra Rainbow* was young and even jaunty.

In the fall of 1999 it was engaged in the tramp trade, picking up cargoes where it could, and working primarily between the Malay Archipelago and Japan. It was crewed by fifteen Filipinos working under the command of two Japanese officers—a sixty-eight-year-old captain named Ko Ikeno, and a chief engineer named Kenzo Ogawa, who was sixty-nine. Both of these officers were lifelong seamen. Captain Ikeno had graduated from the Tokyo University of Fisheries, and had gone to sea when he was twenty-five, in 1956. Eleven years later he had assumed his first command, and with the exception of four years spent on land, he had inhabited the ocean ever since, serving as the master of cargo ships and trading in various corners of the world. Ikeno was a more careful captain than Allen Marin, of the *Kristal*, but fundamentally he was a typical merchant master—not some distant figure with braid on his shoulder but a modestly paid working man in ordinary clothes, a technician whose thinking had been subtly elevated by the responsibilities

that he bore. It is not clear whether Ikeno ever loved the ocean; few merchant mariners do for long. Later it certainly came to terrify him. But like others he had a family ashore, and he was a reliable, almost stolid man, who simply made his living this way.

On the morning of October 17, 1999, after an uneventful crossing of the Java Sea, the *Alondra Rainbow* arrived with empty holds at the outer anchorage of Kuala Tanjung, an equatorial port dominated by an aluminum smelter on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, west and north of Singapore, at roughly the midpoint of the Malacca Strait. Captain Ikeno posted a normal pirate watch through the night, and in the morning eased his ship into the port, to an assigned berth. Over the next five days the *Alondra Rainbow* took aboard a full load of 6,972 bundles of aluminum ingots, each bundle weighing about a metric ton, or 1,000 kilograms. The work

was unhurried, as loadings go. It was supervised by the ship's chief mate, a Filipino with the musical name of Voltaire Lapore. The cargo had a value of about \$10 million, which happened to be the value of the *Alondra Rainbow* as well. Captain Ikeno's job was to shepherd this \$20 million package 3,300 miles north across the open ocean to Omutashi, Japan, on the southern island of Kyushu. Once free of the Malacca and Singapore Straits the route would take the ship through the waters between the Malay Peninsula and the island of Borneo,



across the South China Sea past the Philippines, past Taiwan, and finally across the East China Sea. The trip would require about a week. In preparation Captain Ikeno had the ship fueled.

Only ten weeks remained in the twentieth century. As always, the air at Kuala Tanjung was hot and humid. Local chandlers came aboard with their supplies and paperwork, as did the port's hawkers, who scampered up the gangway and sold directly to the crew. The hawkers' goods were global things like garish radios and running shoes, many of them stolen from other ships. They haggled in broken English, the language of the sea. It was a typical port scene, too industrialized to seem exotic, but beneath its machinery and concrete, much wilder than it appeared to be. By late afternoon on October 22, the *Alondra Rainbow* was ready to sail. The sun set behind Sumatra at 6:06 P.M. Two hours later, after maneuvering to clear the dock, the ship got under way. By the time it cleared the outer anchorage

and was headed down the Malacca Strait, the deep night had fallen. The crewmen were tired as usual after a stay in port, as much because of the disruption of their sleeping patterns as because of any work or drinking they might have done.

The bridge was darkened to allow the watch to see outside. Captain Ikeno stood duty there, along with the ship's third officer and a helmsman steering by hand. The steering was passive on such a calm night. Occasionally Captain Ikeno asked for a heading correction or a small turn. The *Alondra Rainbow* moved to the southeast at a moderate speed, barely trembling with the exertion. An almost full moon illuminated the waters from high overhead. The ocean's surface drowsed in the balmy air; it foamed with the ship's passage and rose into little waves in the wake, but shortly settled down again and slept. In the moonlight that wake would have been clearly visible to anyone looking back from outside on the bridge's wings, but the seamen's attention was focused necessarily on what lay ahead. There were islands around, dark masses, some sprinkled with lights. Among them moved ships, ferries, and coastal craft—obstacles that appeared as masthead lights, or as ghostly shapes, or not at all. Despite radar's appeal as an all-knowing eye, the smaller vessels would have been invisible to it, and even some of the larger ones might occasionally have been missed. As an experienced mariner, Captain Ikeno was aware of these dangers, of course. But eventually he felt he had the necessary space, and he accelerated the *Alondra Rainbow* to its full 13 knots. At 10:00 P.M. he ordered the helmsman to switch on the autopilot and set in an east-southeasterly heading of 113 degrees, outbound for the Singapore Strait and the ocean beyond. Having reminded the third officer to keep a careful lookout for pirates, he left the bridge for his quarters, one deck below. He intended to relax, draft a departure telex to the ship's owners, and take a bath. A few minutes later, with the moon now directly overhead, the *Alondra Rainbow* came under attack.

The assault was not a casually opportunistic act—yet another case of native fishermen suddenly striking at passing wealth—but, rather, the culmination of an elaborate plot. The operational phase appears to have started nearly three weeks earlier, with a meeting in a coffee shop at the port of Batam, Indonesia, just across the strait from Singapore. At least two of the future pirates were there—a local resident and ship's engineer named Burhan Nanda and a Sulawesi named Christianus Mintodo. Both men were middle-aged. Mintodo said he held a master's certificate, variably from Honduras or Belize. Both men were short and slight but physically tough, and undoubtedly they had spent hard years at sea. Mintodo in particular had a dangerous air, a quiet voice and restrained demeanor belied by a ruthlessness that was obvious in his eyes. It is presumed that he knew Nanda already, and that both men had been

involved in piracy before. They were joined at the table by a recruiter for the current venture, an "employment agent" who went by Yan, or Yance, Makatengkeng, and who outlined the plan. Makatengkeng has since become a fugitive from justice, though at little risk of being found. He was serving as an agent for the real power, an anonymous figure known simply as "the Boss." This man is believed by investigators to be Chinese, though such distinctions mean little on the ocean today.

For the pirates in Batam the Boss was a disembodied voice on a throwaway phone. He telephoned Makatengkeng at the coffee shop and welcomed the new "officers" aboard. The conversation would probably have seemed legitimate to anyone listening in. The words were those of an honest employer, working through an honest agent to hire an honest crew: Christianus Mintodo was to be the captain of a ship, Burhan Nanda his chief engineer. The setup reflected normal arrangements on the high seas. All that was required was a slight shift of a word or two, or even just of implication, to unleash the mayhem that followed.

But intricate planning was involved, most of it logistical. Mintodo and Nanda flew to Jakarta, on the northern tip of Java, where they hired a port service boat to ferry them to the *Sanho*, an old freighter lying inconspicuously in the outer anchorage. The *Sanho* was a pirate ship, pure and simple. It was financed by the Boss or his syndicate and commanded by a man who called himself Marnes Zachawarus and is now another fugitive from justice. While lying off Jakarta the *Sanho* took on fuel and provisions. Over several days a crew of thirty-five pirates was assembled, including of course Mintodo and Nanda. Most of these men were Indonesian, but they included Chinese, Malaysians, Thais, and perhaps other nationalities. They were divided into groups according to skill and function. The hijacking team was made up of fifteen armed men equipped with a fast boat that probably was stowed somewhere aboard.

On October 16, after receiving a satellite call from Makatengkeng, the *Sanho* left Jakarta and headed upcoast for the port of Kuala Tanjung. It arrived there on the night of October 21, and lingered in the outer harbor. The next day word came from a port informant that the *Alondra Rainbow* would depart around sunset. The timing was convenient. There is a theory that one of the pirates may have gone aboard when the ship was berthed, perhaps by posing as a hawker, and that he hid himself away in order later to emerge and lower ropes to the others. But the hijacking team consisted of nimble men who would have had no trouble securing grapples and ropes on their own, and who were practiced as well at the art of shimmying barefoot up bamboo poles. It is unknown how they actually proceeded, though it seems likely that the *Sanho* put to sea first, that it was one of the ships the *Alondra Rainbow* passed by on the sleeping, moonlit ocean, that the pirates approached from

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ON SEPTEMBER 12, 1953.
A COUNTRY FELL IN LOVE.

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behind in their small, fast boat, and that while the *Alondra Rainbow* plowed ahead under autopilot at 13 knots, they easily climbed onto its stern.

At 10:30 P.M. Captain Ikeno was at work at his desk one level below the bridge when he noticed thumping on the deck overhead, and simultaneously heard garbled shouts on the intercom. He rushed up the stairs and found that the bridge door was blocked from the inside. When he shoved at it hard enough to force a small opening, he saw pistols and knives, and wisely desisted. The pirates yanked the door open, pushed him against a wall, and held a knife to his throat. In the same thick English used to haggle for goods, they threatened to kill him if he resisted. One of them fired several rounds into the ceiling to make the message clear.

There was a sign on the bridge that read SAFETY FIRST in block letters. However, safety is always a relative condition. The *Alondra Rainbow* was proceeding unmanned and at full speed through some of the busiest waters in the world, but Captain Ikeno was occupied with more immediate concerns.

He counted about ten pirates on the bridge, armed with knives, guns, and bolo swords. They wore ski masks and loose clothes, and were barefoot. From their language and build and what he could see of their skin, he thought they included both Malaysians and Indonesians. They had roped the hands of the third officer and the helmsman behind their backs, and they did the same now to him. Ikeno was afraid of their tempers, and he did not speak. One of the pirates took his wrist-

watch, and another took the ship's master key out of his pants pocket. They then forced him to guide them through the accommodation decks, where they pulled terrified sailors out of their cabins, bound and blindfolded them, and sent them to be held in the crew's messroom.

Captain Ikeno's fellow Japanese officer, the aging chief engineer, tried desperately to hold his cabin door closed from within, but he was quickly overpowered. The third engineer was on duty deep in the engine room, working in its cacophonous isolation, when suddenly the pirates appeared as if in pantomime, shoving the captain before them. They made the third engineer reduce the ship's speed, and then bound and blindfolded him, and shoved him up the stairways to the messroom. The entire crew of seventeen had now been captured. Captain Ikeno was led to his cabin and forced to open the ship's safe. The pirates grabbed the cash that was kept there—several thousand dollars, in U.S. and Japanese bills—and took the crew's papers and passports and the captain's second wristwatch. They also ransacked the other cabins for anything of value, which wasn't much. They took the captain to the messroom, blindfolded him like the others,

and threatened to slaughter everyone if anyone rebelled.

Ikeno and his crew had every reason to believe the threat. Merely one year before, in September of 1998, a smaller Japanese-owned freighter named the *Tenryu* had gone missing soon after departing from the same port of Kuala Tanjung with a similar load of aluminum, and a crew of fifteen. Three months later the *Tenryu* was discovered under a changed name and flag in a Chinese port, but the cargo was missing, as was the original crew, all of whom are presumed to have been killed. The strangers found aboard the *Tenryu* were arrested by the Chinese under suspicion of piracy, but because they claimed to have joined the ship legitimately in Myanmar, and possessed used airline tickets to Rangoon along with valid Myanmar visas issued in Singapore, the Chinese authorities released them for lack of evidence. In the background was the understanding that they had not committed any crime in China. For Captain Ikeno and the crew sitting captive in the *Alondra Rainbow*, it was just as well not to know that at least one of the pirates

on their ship had been among those released by the Chinese.

It is not clear whether the designated captain, Christianus Mintodo, had yet come aboard, or who exactly was on the bridge, but it seems likely that the *Alondra Rainbow* was again under control, and being steered by experienced hands. Was it midnight now? The captive crew sat in blindness on the messroom floor, each man in isolation, feeling the familiar vibrations of the ship in motion. Because there were guards in the

room, they probably did not talk. Captain Ikeno tried to keep track of time. A couple of hours after being shoved into the room, he noticed a change in vibration, which he recognized as a reduction in speed, and he heard a pump start up. He then felt a sharp bump. Soon afterward the pirates began to take the men, still bound and blindfolded, one by one from the room.

They were led down the corridor, through a door, and out onto an aft deck, to the railing. The pirates then removed the captives' blindfolds. Ikeno found himself looking three feet down onto the deck of a small freighter that had come up alongside. There were many armed men aboard. In the moonlight Ikeno saw that the freighter was rusty and badly maintained, and that it was riding high, as if its holds were empty. It was probably the original pirate vessel, the *Sanho*, commanded by Marnes Zachawarus. Ikeno dubbed it "the dirty ship," a name that stuck. He and his crew were made to jump down onto its deck, after which they were led below to two separate rooms, where they were blindfolded again, and ordered to lie on dirty mattresses spread on the floor. The pirates warned them to be silent, and said

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that anyone who tried to stand or look outside would die. From the sound of things—the occasional bump, the clatter of equipment, the voices of men moving back and forth—the two ships lay together for another hour or more. But the night was still deep when they drew apart and went their separate ways.

For nearly a week Captain Ikeno and his crew lay bound and blindfolded in sweltering rooms as the dirty ship carried them northwest through the Malacca Strait and on into the vastness of the Andaman Sea. They were fed only twice, taken to the toilet, and given dirty drinking water from a can marked ESSO on the side. This last detail they learned from Voltaire Lapore, the chief mate, who saw it from beneath his blindfold. As the blindfolds naturally loosened, others learned to see as well. Ikeno's vision got to be so good that he could discern among the pirates, and was able to study the man he thought was the leader—about forty-five years old, five feet eight inches tall, muscular, potbellied, dark-skinned, and with the features of an Indian or a Pakistani. The pirates were going around unmasked, whether because they trusted the blindfolds or believed that the prisoners would not survive.

On the seventh night the engine stopped. The pirates came to the rooms, took the *Alondra Rainbow's* crew outside, and made them lie on the deck. The scene was similar to one that had occurred less than a year before, and that the crew must have been aware of: a bulk carrier named the *Cheung Son*, loaded with steel-mill slag, had been hijacked on the South China Sea by pirates dressed in Chinese customs uniforms, who had lined up the twenty-three crewmen and then systematically clubbed them to death before attaching heavy objects to their bodies and heaving them overboard. It would have been of little consolation to the *Alondra Rainbow's* crew, lying prone on the deck of a dirty ship in the middle of the Andaman Sea, that the killers had recently been arrested in China, and that a rare trial was about to begin. The men standing above them now were clearly not the sort to care.

It turned out, however, that the pirates had a different solution in mind. Rather than dirtying their hands with killings, they floated the *Alondra Rainbow's* inflatable life raft, which they had purloined at the start, and with disregard for their prisoners' ultimate survival, they forced the crew to crawl aboard. Captain Ikeno was last to go. The pirates cut the rope. The dirty ship steamed away, disappearing so thoroughly into the night that neither it nor the pirates aboard have yet been found.

The crew felt little relief at having been freed. They were now marooned in a crowded rubber raft, without effective means of propulsion, adrift on the open ocean. They had no radio or navigation gear, and they were completely lost, with no idea even of what ocean they were in. The raft came equipped with the barest provisions: a few cans of

food, a supply of fresh water, a first-aid kit, two sponges, two safety knives with buoyant handles, two bailers, two paddles, ten signal flares, and a pamphlet of survival instructions, written in English. The instructions amounted to Don't get cold, don't get hot, try to stay out of the sun, and do not drink seawater.

There may also have been something about keeping up morale—but that was especially hard. For ten days the crew drifted. Ten ships passed within sight, and did not stop. All ten flares were fired off. The water rations grew precariously small. The crew caught a few fish, which they held up and squeezed over their mouths for the juice that dripped out. As the days went by, the men began to pray and cry. The mood grew so surly that Captain Ikeno feared that he and the chief engineer, as the only Japanese in the raft, might be attacked and even murdered. He formally ceded command—most critically of the water supply—to his Filipino chief mate, Voltaire Lapore.

On the tenth day adrift, around noon, a small commercial fishing boat came into view. The stranded crew took off their shirts and waved them in the air. The boat slowly approached. Several times it changed direction, as if the fishermen were uncertain whether to get involved. Eventually it drew to within shouting range and stopped—maintaining a wary distance. Pirates were known to have posed as stranded mariners to lure innocent vessels into traps. The men in the life raft could see that the boat flew the flag of Thailand. One of them shouted in English that they were fifteen Filipinos and two Japanese, that they were victims of pirates, and that if they were not rescued they would die. The fishermen might have understood a few key words. They remained suspicious and shouted back, demanding passports. It was an odd request, since pirates have passports too, sometimes in abundance, but this was not the moment for a debate. The immediate problem was of course that the crew's passports had been stolen. One man had an expired passport tucked away in his clothes, and he held it up. The fishermen were not convinced, but finally their skipper grudgingly allowed Captain Ikeno, alone, to climb aboard. Once on the fishing boat, Ikeno tried to explain what had happened, but he could not make himself understood. He wrote out his name and the *Alondra Rainbow's*, and waited while the skipper radioed the details to his company. The radio conversation was in Thai, and unintelligible to Ikeno. It clearly reassured the skipper, however, and he gave permission for the remaining crewmen to come aboard. The next day they arrived at the Thai resort island of Phuket, where amid all the beach hotels and sunburned vacationers they finally stepped ashore. It was November 9, 1999, eighteen days after the attack. The Filipinos flew to the Philippines, where, for want of better jobs, most if not all eventually hired on to other ships. Captain Ikeno and his chief engineer flew home to Tokyo, and both retired from the sea.

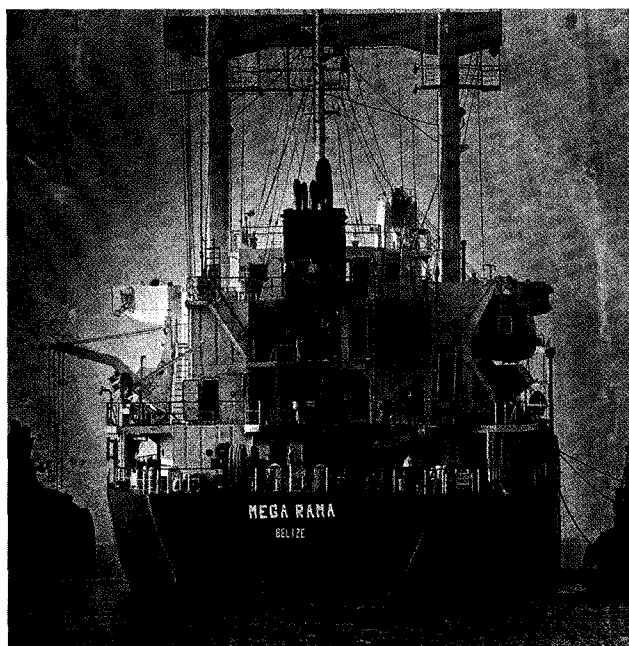
The *Alondra Rainbow*, however, was still going strong. After the hijacking, Christianus Mintodo and his pirate crew sailed it brazenly through the Singapore Strait and across the southern edge of the South China Sea to the Malaysian port of Miri, on the island of Borneo. While under way they painted the hull sides black (a one-day job), and rechristened the ship *Global Venture*—a particularly apt name, which they carefully inscribed on the bow, the stern, and the superstructure. They also painted over the funnel's stripes—the blue, white, and red now becoming a single somber black. In the sheltered waters off Miri another ship came alongside, and took on 3,000 metric tons of the aluminum ingots—nearly half of the *Alondra Rainbow*'s \$10 million treasure. The transfer must have required several days. The receiving ship was a freighter named the *Bansan II*. It sailed for Subic Bay, in the Philippines, where apparently it arrived renamed as the *Victoria*, and presented satisfactory import documents for the cargo. The *Alondra Rainbow*'s aluminum was quickly sold for a small fortune. Attempts to recoup the loss by the insurance company bogged down in the Philippine courts. The local police mounted a criminal investigation of the *Victoria*, which went nowhere. There has been no prosecution of any kind.

Meanwhile, Christianus Mintodo on the *Alondra Rainbow* was suffering from a problem related to the sheer size of the heist—where to find a buyer for the 4,000 metric tons of industrial material that remained in the ship's holds. Little is known about the tactics that he used once the *Alondra Rainbow* left Miri—only that the name was changed again, to the *Mega Rama*, that the home port was shown on the stern as Belize, and that the ship steamed generally westward, either through the Strait of Malacca or by a more roundabout southern route, before finally gaining access to the Indian Ocean. One week after the hijacking, when the *Alondra Rainbow* became overdue in Japan, its owners had reported it missing. The meaning was obvious. From an office building in Kuala Lumpur a piracy-reporting center maintained by the international shipping industry sent out alerts and descriptions, along with notice of a \$200,000 reward that was offered by the insurance company for information leading to the ship's capture. For several days a search was mounted by patrol ships and airplanes from several nations, including Japan. But the *Alondra Rainbow* had vanished.

IV. A 95,000-MILE PROBLEM

That a ship can hide in plain sight would hardly come as a surprise to the U.S. Coast Guard, which for years has been locked in a fight against smugglers skilled at pulling disappearing acts, and has had to deal as well with the reverse side of the magic trick, which is the sudden emergence as if out of nowhere of ships that may pose a threat—either because they are decrepit and may spill something or because they are involved in crime. The Coast Guard is a peculiar organization, a militarized hybrid that is as much a shipping inspectorate as a maritime police force. It consists of 5,700 civilians and 43,000 people in uniform, some of them wishing for battle, but most of them not. As the only armed service required to reside outside the Pentagon, it has long been a bastard child, with a bastard child's complaints—lack of love, lack of funding—and it remains a

little uncomfortable in its skin. But through difficult experience it is also very familiar with the interwoven disorders of the sea; and by chance of history now, with the United States facing this new form of oceanic threat, it is unexpectedly in a position unique among American forces, of being able at least to respond in relevant ways. As a result it has been shunted from the Department of Transportation to that of Homeland Security, given a bigger allowance, and assigned the lead role in protecting American shores. This may prove to be a thankless



task, but the Coast Guard is basking in the implicit praise, and it has set diligently to work.

The challenge is daunting. The United States has 95,000 miles of coastline, and more than a hundred seaports capable of handling large ships. It is the most active sea-trading nation on earth, accounting for a large percentage of long-distance maritime traffic worldwide, and annually accommodating more than 60,000 port calls by oceangoing ships, the great majority of which are foreign-flagged and many of which are operated by fictitious offshore companies, whose real owners are difficult or impossible to identify. The owners are mostly ordinary businesspeople (and quite a few are American), but they could easily include terrorists as well, and they certainly do include smugglers of goods and drugs and people. Moreover, the ships are crewed by several hundred thousand nearly anonymous foreign sailors drawn on short contracts from a much larger pool. Many of them are Muslims, and almost all come from troubled parts of

the world, where America is resented, corruption is rife, and authentic documentation can easily be bought. These sailors necessarily bypass all the standard screening procedures by immigration authorities, and arrive with their vessels in American ports. It is believed that in the past many jumped ship, though how many is unknown, because the captains had no reason to report their losses to authorities on the shore. Procedures have tightened somewhat now, but the United States remains utterly dependent on these crews, trust them or not. Their ships bring in six million containers a year, 3.7 million vehicles, 53 percent of the nation's oil, and mountains of other goods and materials too numerous to name; and they take away significant amounts as well. They carry more than three fourths of American foreign trade as measured by weight, and somewhat less than half as measured by value. Interrupt the flow with a terrorist attack, and the backup would instantly reach around the world, with devastating results. Institute heavy-handed inspections and other procedures to head off an attack, and the damage could be even worse.

The Coast Guard has no choice but to move gingerly. It has followed a logical path, starting with tightening the security of the largest ports by means of harbor patrols, cruise-ship escorts, civilian-based "harbor watches," better fences, and tighter gate and ship-access controls. The costs of the effort have been high, grossly estimated in the billions so far, and as the controls have expanded, ferry-men, tour-boat

operators, and others have begun to object to the burden of expensive and inconvenient restrictions. Still, if safety has no price and is defined narrowly, the improvements have been real: ports, waterfront facilities, and ships in harbor are certainly better protected now against land-based or small-boat attacks. None of this, however, does much to address the more serious threat of a heavy maritime attack—a ship that delivers a weapon, for instance, or simply steams in and blows itself up. The desire for funding and power is typically difficult to differentiate from genuine patriotic concern, but the vulnerability is real, and Coast Guard officials make the valid point that by the time a ship pops over the horizon and pulls into port, little defense is possible. The problem is that popping over the horizon is what inbound ships just naturally do. The only solution is to push the horizon farther away—a Herculean task that Coast Guard members are now straining to perform. "Increasing the maritime domain awareness," they call it, borrowing unnecessarily from the Pentagon's pompous, self-indicting jargon. They have been aware of the maritime domain for years, and for better or worse they understand

full well that as they push the horizon out into it, they are pushing into anarchy.

There is no obvious technological solution. With the exception of ten highly localized vessel-traffic services designed to prevent collisions in the major harbors, there is no U.S. coastal radar picket system, no maritime version of an early-warning system, for the good reason that it would be enormously expensive to build and maintain, and would not be able to look over the horizon anyway. An additional problem would be informational clutter. One of the high-ranking officers I spoke to at the Coast Guard's Washington, D.C., headquarters laughed at the idea, often suggested by landlubbers, that radar could provide a panacea. He said, "We've got thirty million boats out there." Referring to the radar's adjustable sensitivity, he said, "Can you imagine how we'd have to turn down the gain?" That brought up the subject of attacks by vessels smaller than 300 tons, the Coast Guard's minimum definition of a ship and currently the bottom limit for much of the security thinking. It was a

Ships bring six million containers a year to the U.S., 3.7 million vehicles, 53 percent of the nation's oil. Interrupt the flow with a terrorist attack, and the backup would instantly reach around the world.

possibility that left the poor man shaking his head at the complications; he said that the Coast Guard was aware of the problem, and would be turning to it as soon as it could. In any case, for the physical monitoring of coastal seas, alternatives other than radar are being pursued, including increased ship and air patrols, the use of surveillance satellites, and a hard-wired shipboard GPS-based transponder system. This last, however, the shipping industry is resisting, arguing that it

will reveal proprietary information to competitors and (less plausibly) provide targeting coordinates for attacks by terrorists and rogue states. All these initiatives will require years to implement, and even in combination will leave loopholes big enough to steam a ship through. At best, the sort of information they can provide is crude—a ship by some name is approaching from some location out there on the ocean—and does little to answer the more important questions of who the owner is, who and what is aboard, and (the big one) how legitimate its intentions are. Transparency, in other words, will still be lacking.

The Coast Guard is also shoving at the horizon with a regulatory change: the requirement for four-day advance notice of arrival, where before only one day's notice was necessary. This notification, along with a crew list, a cargo description, and several other details, has to be sent to a new Coast Guard operation in West Virginia, known as the National Vessel Movement Center. For the Coast Guard, the term "movement" means merely the arrival or departure of a ship. But the center's name has ended up being an embarrassment, because to outsiders it conjures up visions

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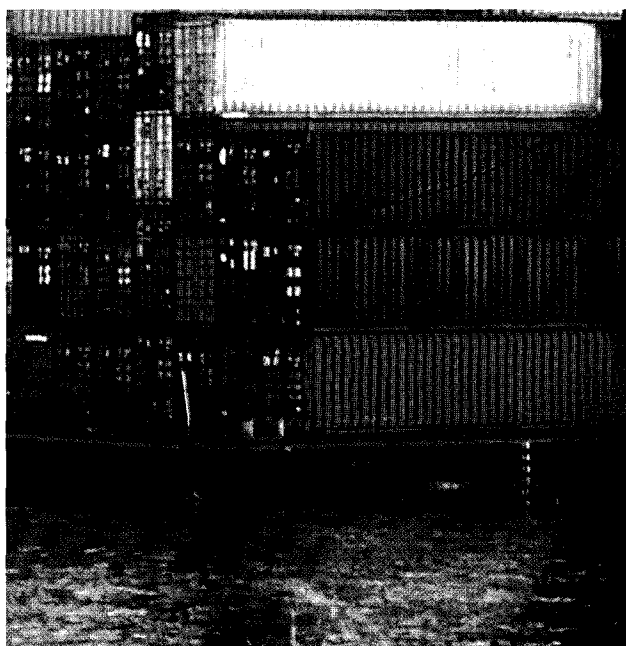
of a high-technology war room providing an omniscient view of the ocean, and this in turn requires the Coast Guard to explain that such views are not possible, and if not, why not. Where would you even start? The National Vessel Movement Center is an office full of clerks. They receive about 600 notices a day, by phone, fax, and e-mail, and they enter the information into a consolidated database, which Coast Guard intelligence and operations people can then contemplate, trying to discern which ships seem somehow out of whack—one that's importing wheat from Indonesia, for instance, or carrying an oversized crew, or maybe just belonging to Nova Spirit and flying Tonga's flag. The idea is to intercept, board, and inspect those ships while they are still safely at sea. Nationwide this is being done on average about twice a day.

The Coast Guard, like the Navy, searches for bombs only on the basis of specific information, which does occasionally arrive, but so far has turned up nothing. For want of action, therefore, the emphasis is on the crews, and particularly those from certain Muslim countries, who are fingerprinted and photographed by immigration authorities upon arrival, and unless they have valid visas are restricted to the ships while in port. It is said that this is a temporary adjustment, until better crewmen's documents can be brought into play. There is unembarrassed talk in Washington of a future under control, in which sailors will undergo meaningful background checks, and will be supplied with unforgeable, biometrically verifiable IDs by honest, appropriately equipped, and cooperative governments. Panama, for instance, will vouch for the integrity of, say, an Indonesian deckhand working on a ship operated by a Cayman Island company on behalf of an anonymous Greek. This is a vision so disconnected from reality that it might raise questions about the sanity of the United States. Back in the real world, the new guard services in ports are provided by private security companies, and are paid for by the ships at the cost of thousands of dollars for a typical stay. The additional expense seems to be accelerating a global shift, already under way, from brown-skinned sailors toward the even cheaper Chinese. Domestically the new procedures have brought a presumed reduction in ship-jumping incidents, which, if it has not measurably headed off terrorist attack, has at least forced would-be immigrants to jump ship elsewhere—

say, in Mexico—before joining the crowds of unauthorized visitors coming overland into the United States.

Meanwhile, the Customs Service, now also a part of the Department of Homeland Security, has imposed new reporting requirements on inbound freight, and has embarked with much fanfare on a container-security initiative, by which it is placing inspectors in twenty large ports overseas (soon it will extend the initiative to ports in several Muslim nations). Because the physical inspection of a container can take hours, only about two percent of the six million units headed to the United States each year are opened; but some can be scanned by x-ray machines or radiation detectors, and more can be looked over by experienced inspectors checking for paperwork anomalies. Still, the opportunities for something to slip in

are innumerable. There is talk of equipping the containers with tamper-proof seals and intrusion-detection devices, neither of which would stop the loading of a bomb at the outset, or more than inconvenience a determined terrorist who wanted to insert such a weapon during a container's long voyage to port. I spoke to a Dutch maritime official very familiar with the U.S. effort in Rotterdam, who was sympathetic to the American plight but privately scoffed at the idea that the new inspections had any meaning at all. Speaking just of that one



port, he said, "Look, if you want to send a bomb through, it's so simple! The chances of it being filtered out are almost *nil*!" He was not being critical so much as flatly descriptive. As a believer in good government, but long exposed to the chaos of the ocean, he seemed to have learned the hard lesson that government tools might simply not apply.

The Coast Guard struggles on with the tools that it has, as it must. Though its members tend to be alert, and very aware of the complexities that they face, as a collective they are confined by governmental frames of reference. One sign of their confinement is the effort that they expended in 2002 to create a new body of ship and port security regulations overseen by the very same institution that has proved to be incapable of controlling the situation at sea—the International Maritime Organization. As of July of 2004, every ship above 500 tons will have to designate a Ship Security Officer (SSO), who will work under a designated Company Security Officer (CSO) and be familiar with the

new documents required to be carried aboard, including a Ship Security Plan (SSP), which is based on a Ship Security Assessment (SSA). The paperwork will be subject to the approval of each ship's flag state, which in most cases will rely as usual on the expert oversight (paid for by the shipowners) of the classification societies, which for these purposes are to be known as Recognized Security Organizations (RSOs). Another complicated set of rules and acronyms will apply to ports. The effect has been the instantaneous creation of a whole new industry, as tens of thousands of ships and mobile offshore drilling platforms struggle to get the paperwork done.

Close observers have been incredulous. Reflecting a widespread view, one of them said to me, "We're doing nothing but creating this pile of regulations. It's a small pile compared to other piles, but look what the flags of convenience have already done with those. Oh, on paper everything will be all right, but in reality it will not make any difference. And what is a flag of convenience, after all? It's an absolute nothing. In the worst cases it's just a commercial company running a registry. Money flows in and certificates flow out. I don't want to use words like 'cowardice' or 'over-reaction' to describe what the United States has done—just 'ineffective.' Because you can get all the paperwork you want, no problem. And it will not help."

He was probably right. The only sure effect of the new regulations is that legitimate operators, who do not pose a threat, will comply. But it is likely that terrorists will comply as well, and that, like many shipowners today, they will evade detection not by ducking procedures and regulations but by using them to hide. This would be very easy to do. Paradoxically, when a ship approaching U.S. shores does *not* comply, it will be because it is a bumbler, and therefore almost by definition innocent. People in the Coast Guard know this: they are not protecting the shores from a random, hundred-year storm but confronting a calculating and adaptable form of chaos—an intelligent thing. In private conversation most continue to talk about "channeling the attack," or reducing the odds, but others admit that they may not have affected the odds at all.

V. LAW OF THE SEA

Politically—and ethically—it is of course impossible to sit back and do nothing: the United States is a nation, and it has no choice but to act like one. And although minor successes tend to be portrayed as significant victories, there is no denying that determined policing does sometimes pay off—both here and abroad. It turned out to be helpful, for instance, that after the naval search for the hijacked *Alondra Rainbow* failed, in early November of 1999, the hunt for the pirates did not end. With the description of the *Alondra Rainbow* widely disseminated, and \$200,000 in reward money on the table, the piracy-reporting center in Kuala Lumpur received a plausible

report of a sighting toward evening on November 13, a few weeks after the ship had disappeared. The report came via satellite phone from the captain of a Kuwaiti freighter named the *al-Shuhadaa*, which was sailing in international waters off India's southwest coast. The captain said that the suspect ship's name was illegible in the fading light, but that it appeared to have been freshly painted; he gave the location, and he provided intelligence, apparently gleaned from his radar display, that the ship was moving to the north-northwest, on a compass course of 330 degrees, at 8 knots. The piracy center sent the news to the Indian coast guard, and requested an intercept.

The Indians could have sat back and done nothing. The *Alondra Rainbow* was a Panamanian ship owned by Japanese, crewed by Filipinos, and attacked off the shores of Indonesia by pirates of uncertain nationalities. Its disappearance had no connection to India at all—and there was certainly no domestic constituency expressing outrage and demanding action. India, however, is a party to the Law of the Sea, a sweeping 1994 United Nations treaty (as yet unratified by the United States) that includes a paragraph encouraging nations to stop pirates on the high seas no matter where their crime took place—and old Indian laws to the same effect are left over from British colonial rule. More important, the news of the sighting seems at first to have been contained entirely within the Indian military, which like other militaries is eager to use the equipment that it has, and to take action. The suspect ship had popped into view like a rabbit running across a field, and, without the need for legal or policy thinking, the coast guard just naturally went after it.

A patrol boat named the *Tarabai*, with twenty-four men aboard, headed out from the southern port of Cochin, and early on the night of November 14 spotted the suspect ship on radar at a range of thirteen miles, ahead to the left. The *Tarabai* closed the distance until the ship's lights came dimly into view, and it hailed the ship repeatedly by VHF radio, demanding that it identify itself and reduce its speed. There was no response. On the possibility that the ship's radio had failed (which no one believed), the *Tarabai* flashed its lights and fired two yellow flares, again to no avail. The ship responded by turning 20 degrees left and increasing its speed. The *Tarabai* then fired six warning shots across the bow from the deck-mounted 40/60 millimeter Bofors gun, a modified anti-aircraft cannon. The *Tarabai* settled into a safe position one to two miles away, and shadowed the ship for the rest of the night.

When daylight spread over the ocean, the *Tarabai*'s crew saw the ship clearly for the first time. It was a good-looking vessel, a giant compared with their own. Through binoculars they could see the name *Mega Rama* and the flag state Belize painted on the stern. In the early morning, a turboprop patrol plane, a German-built Dornier, flew onto the scene, and joined the *Tarabai* on the VHF channel, calling

for the ship to stop. This time a man answered, identifying the ship as the *Mega Rama*, with a cargo of aluminum and a crew of fifteen Indonesians aboard. He said that they were bound from Manila for Fujairah, an Arabian port. When ordered to submit to a boarding, he refused, informing the Indians that the *Mega Rama* had a schedule to keep, that it was in international waters, and that it could do whatever it pleased. This was hardly the sort of response one would expect from an ordinary merchant crew faced with a hostile naval force. Headquarters easily confirmed the lack of international records for a *Mega Rama*, and from the ship's description concluded correctly that the *Alondra Rainbow* and its pirates had been found.

The patrol plane was lightly armed with a fixed self-loading rifle. On instructions from shore it fired a few rounds across the *Alondra Rainbow*'s bow, and when that had no effect came around and hit the ship with five full strafing runs. For the pilots this was fine sport, and the high point of their careers, but for all the good it did they might as well have been throwing stones. Low on fuel, they broke off and headed for home. The tenacious *Tarabai*, however, did not go away, and with permission from base, it began plastering the *Alondra Rainbow* with round after round from its Bofors gun. The shoot-up continued intermittently throughout the day, smashing the ship's windows and punching holes into its superstructure and hull. Still the pirates refused to slow.

Later it was discovered that they had abandoned the bridge and taken refuge in the engine room, safely below the waterline, leaving the ship to proceed on autopilot alone. They appeared to be trying to reach the territorial waters of India's archenemy, Pakistan, where their pursuers would dare not follow. When it seemed that they might actually succeed, India dispatched several warships, including a navy missile corvette named the *Prahar*, which arrived during the second night and added the threat of its heavier cannons to the argument. This did the trick. Around sunrise on November 16, having run from the *Tarabai* for thirty-five hours and nearly 575 miles, the *Alondra Rainbow* drifted to a stop.

Soon afterward a larger coast-guard ship, the *Veera*, came onto the scene, and found the *Alondra Rainbow* lying dead on a flat sea, with the *Tarabai* and the *Prahar* standing close by. Smoke was billowing from the fugitive ship's bridge and superstructure, and a group of pirates—all fifteen—stood at the bow waving white shirts and holding their arms high in surrender. Teams from the *Veera* and the *Tarabai* soon climbed aboard and handcuffed the pirates, who included Christianus Mintodo and his companion

from the Batam coffee shop, the chief engineer Burhan Nanda. They were transferred to captivity on the *Veera*.

The fires aboard the *Alondra Rainbow* turned out to be paperwork conflagrations that had been set by the pirates to destroy incriminating records, and they were eventually extinguished. More seriously, the pirates had opened sea valves in the engine's cooling pipes in an attempt to scuttle the ship. They were nearly successful. By the time Mintodo and his men were safely under guard, the engine room had flooded, and was starting to pull the ship down by the stern; had the engine room's bulkhead collapsed under pressure, the end would have come very quickly. The navy however sent in divers who managed to find and close the valves. Emergency pumps were set up on deck, the engine room was emptied, and the *Alondra Rainbow* was saved. The *Veera* was given the job of towing it 345 miles to the port of Mumbai, otherwise known as Bombay. The trip took four days, during which the pirates were interrogated. It is widely believed but officially denied that they were

roughed up; one of them was somehow shot in the leg. A few of them are said to have made confessions, which were excluded from the subsequent trial.

What would be the next target? A cruise ship full of Americans? A European ferry? A freighter off Gibraltar? Already the navies of the U.S. and its allies have their hands full. And the ocean is a very big place.

When the pirates got to Mumbai, they were displayed to the press before being turned over to the police—forced to kneel on the *Veera*'s deck, with their hands bound behind their backs, while a proud and possessive coast-guard commander in

naval whites described their arrest as “the catch of the millennium.” But the Mumbai police operate in a chaotic city of 18 million people, with plenty of homegrown criminality, and they had a different view. One of their high officials later told me that the *Alondra Rainbow* was like an orphan dropped off on the doorstep. He said, “The common practice if such a ship comes, you shoo her away. Otherwise you don't know what to do with her. The question of jurisdiction comes up everywhere.” The same was true for the pirates, criminals whom he called “the scum of the earth.” What would happen, he asked, if India convicted and imprisoned them, but after their release Indonesia refused to recognize or accept them? There was little chance of that happening in this case, he admitted, but when the orphans were first delivered, the possibility had to be considered, if only in the abstract.

“What did you conclude?” I asked.

“That they would become stateless people.” The problem for India would be where to send them. I suggested they could be repatriated to their natural environment at sea. He smiled wanly.

In any case, the Mumbai police had no choice politically but to proceed with a prosecution. They held the pirates for two weeks at a harbor police station known as Yellow Gate, a dismal complex built in 1921, which contains five cells with wooden bars along a dim hallway, and looks like a movie set meant to depict a Third World hell. Later the pirates were moved to the city's overcrowded central jail, where they were kept together in a high-security cell. As a group they decided to grow their hair long. Meanwhile, in China, after a six-day trial, thirteen of the pirates who had attacked the *Cheung Son* and murdered its crew were sentenced to death; on the way to the execution ground a group of them, who were drunk on rice wine, defiantly sang, "Go, go, go! Alé, alé, alé!" the chorus from a Ricky Martin song called "Cup of Life." This got some press. The *Alondra Rainbow* remained in Mumbai. The ship's Japanese owners had petitioned to have the ship released from Indian custody, and a short legal tussle ensued. In January the owners were finally allowed to tow the *Alondra Rainbow* away. (The ship would eventually be sold, and returned to service under a new name by a company in Singapore.) The year 2000 passed.

Justice moved slowly in Mumbai, owing to an overload in the criminal courts. One of Mintodo's men grew sick, went to the hospital, and died. But early in 2001 the first depositions were taken, and the legal proceedings finally got under way.

There was a strange twist to the logic of the case: though the act of piracy had given India legal jurisdiction, piracy itself is assigned no penalties under the Indian code of law, and the government therefore had to charge the men with other crimes. This it did with abandon, accusing them of multiple acts of armed robbery, attempted murder, assault, theft, and forgery—and even of entering India without valid passports, though they had done so involuntarily, in shackles and under guard.

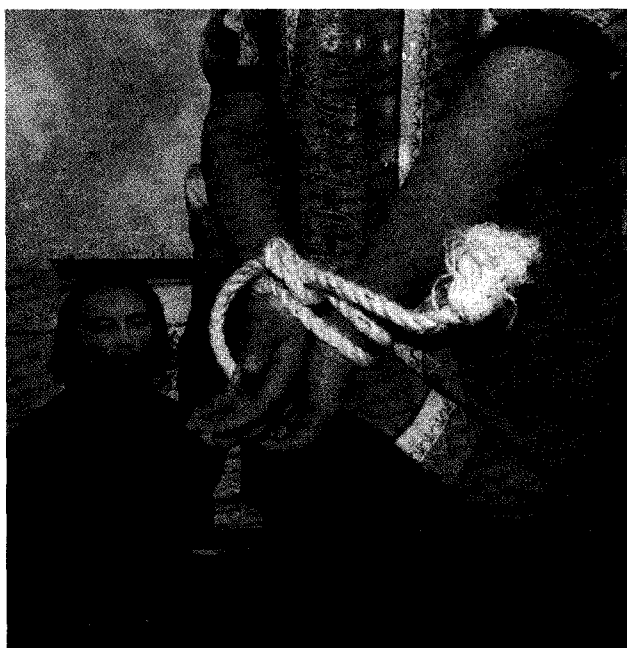
India gave up the jury system in 1961, after it was believed to have failed. Most cases now are argued before single judges, who regulate the proceedings and ultimately hand down the decisions. The judge in the *Alondra Rainbow* case was a typically overworked officer of the mid-level Sessions court of Mumbai. He was a kindly, mostly toothless man in oversized glasses, a Parsi named R. R. Vachha, who had a salt-and-pepper moustache and an upper gum that showed when he smiled. He had a reputation for patience, fairness,

and competently written decisions. The courtroom over which he presided stood on the fourth floor of the old stone-built Secretariat building, from which the British once ruled Mumbai. The room was large, dim, and when crowded, as it usually was, stiflingly hot.

The pirates were brought to their hearings under heavy guard. Before entering the courtroom they had to remove their shoes in the hallway, as all the accused did in Mumbai, because prisoners in the past had hurled their shoes at judges. The pirates, though, were well behaved, and some of them were almost gracious, as if they enjoyed these little excursions from jail. If so, they had plenty to enjoy. Had it run straight through, their trial might have lasted three weeks; instead it was squeezed among other cases a few hours at a time, and dragged on for almost two years. It was an unequal contest from the start. Serving pro bono as the special prosecutor was an obviously brilliant attorney named S.

Venkiteswaran, a master of law and argument, who at sixty-two is the pre-eminent maritime attorney in India, and undoubtedly among the best in the world. He was assisted backstage by a protégé, a rising young attorney named K. R. Shriram, who though not yet as wise and Churchillian as Venkiteswaran is every bit as smart. Against this duo stood several ordinary public defenders, and principally only one—a small-time criminal lawyer named Santosh Deshpande, who never stood a chance.

The star witness was Captain Ikeno. Having been promised full-time police protection while in India, he came twice from Japan to verify the real identity of the *Mega Rama*, and to describe his ordeal in emotional detail. Venkiteswaran later said to me, "Deshpande was flamboyant and played to the gallery. But once the master [Captain Ikeno] gave evidence, I was very sure no one could touch the case. Look—you can ignore all the evidence that you have read, and consider just the basics. Here is a ship with fifteen of the accused in it. They're caught. They've got a property which is hot. It's proved beyond doubt that the vessel is the *Alondra Rainbow*. The master's evidence establishes that he was deprived of possession and control. Once that has happened, it is for the accused to show how they came into possession of that ship. And if they don't show it, then the presumption of the law is that they are the ones who hijacked it. And no attempt was made to look into this aspect at all."



Deshpande occupied a difficult position. The pirates would have made poor witnesses, so he didn't even put them on the stand. He was required nonetheless to support their claim that they were an innocent crew who had been offered jobs by manning agents in Jakarta, and had flown to Manila and sailed without any idea of the ship's ownership or any curiosity about the evidence, abundant aboard, that the vessel's name had been changed twice in a few weeks. He also had to suggest that the crew ran from the Indian forces for fear *they* were pirates, and that the crew had no passports or seamen's cards because the coast guard had thrown them overboard. Still, Deshpande's performance was weak. During his cross-examination of a shipping expert from London, for instance, he should have asked, but did not, "Sir, can you tell us how crews are recruited for ships? Is it normal for sailors to ask questions of the manning agents who offer them jobs? To know the ownership of the vessels they serve on? To know the vessels' histories? Is it unheard of for a ship to change its name? To change its flag? To do this at sea? Have there never been cases of pirates in uniform? Or of patrol boats' being used?" The answers to those questions would not have turned the case, but they might at least have helped to educate the judge about some of the realities at sea.

The pirates were convicted, of course. On February 25, 2003, Judge Vachha handed down a 245-page verdict, finding them guilty on every count except the passport violation, and sentencing them to seven years of "rigorous imprisonment," of which three had already been served. Venkiteswaran was traveling at the time, but was represented in the courtroom by his protégé Shriram. Some of the pirates broke down, lamenting the fate of their families and the effect the separation would have on their children. Others remained calm. One of them came up and congratulated Shriram. From the back bench Christianus Mintodo looked on impassively.

Soon afterward I went to meet Mintodo at the maximum-security prison to which he and the others had been transferred—a nineteenth-century compound with fortresslike walls, in the hot and dusty city of Poona, about a hundred miles inland from Mumbai. The prison turned out to be a surprisingly peaceful place. Though filled to twice its designed capacity, it was noticeably less crowded than the city outside. I waited for Mintodo in a file room that opened onto the central courtyard, and watched inmates languidly sweeping the walks with straw-bundle brooms, or strolling by in small straight-backed groups, dressed in coarse cotton clothes and caps, talking quietly. The air in the shade was pleasantly warm. In the distance a prison phone kept ringing with a double ring, and went unanswered.

Mintodo was wary when he arrived, and at first pretended to speak little English. He was slim, barefoot, and

copper-skinned—a man who at the age of fifty-six still moved with feline precision and grace. He had brought with him one of the younger pirates, Ari Kurniwan, age twenty-six, whose job was to translate, and do most of the talking. We spoke for a while about the food and routines of the prison, the Indian guards, and the prospects for an appeal. I discouraged them from expecting results. We talked about the *Tarabai's* attack, and the way that the *Mega Rama*, as they insisted on calling their ship, had trembled as it was being hit.

Kurniwan said, "We didn't know who was firing on us."

I said nothing.

Mintodo said, "At sea anything can happen."

About that I could agree.

I asked Mintodo why he thought Deshpande had not put him on the witness stand. He did not answer but gazed at me appraisingly. Kurniwan intervened. He said, "This idea is coming now in my mind for the first time!"

Later I asked about the manning agents in Jakarta, the key to their story. Kurniwan responded with a flood of words. "I come in Jakarta port. I meet a broker who says, 'Pay me two hundred dollars, and you'll have a job at three hundred dollars a month.' He gives me an airline ticket to Manila. It's my first flight, and I'm afraid of heights. I close my eyes the whole time. I go to the ship. This is my first job, my first flight, my first time going abroad. Everything is the first."

I said, "What was the name of the agent in Jakarta? I'll go there and find him."

Mintodo was looking into space, somewhere above my head.

Kurniwan said, "When you come into a port you find so many brokers. You don't have to ask their names. You trust them. They give you a job. They give an alias also, those people."

When I asked Mintodo for his contact there, he brought his gaze back down to me. He said, "It was the same agent in Jakarta. A broker. I forget his name."

It was all just a game anyway. Their agent was the one who went by Yan, or Yance, Makatengkeng, who had been at the coffee shop in Batam, and had safely disappeared. He worked for "the Boss," who remains unseen and unknown, and is presumably still active. Mintodo and his men were insignificant players on a very large sea—sailors who got stuck holding the loot, long after the smarter players had covered their tracks. Piracy meanwhile shifts around, and responds to pressures, but either grows or remains essentially unchanged. It was clear in the Poona prison that the pirates understood this too. Their arrest and conviction had been proclaimed around the world as an important message that disorder would not be tolerated on the high seas. But they knew the ocean better than most, and were just biding their time, unrepentant and undeterred. ■

William Langewiesche is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

CLOSE-UP

Many see him as a power-mad, rapacious right-wing vulgarian. Rupert Murdoch has indeed been relentless in building a one-of-a-kind media network that spans the world. What really drives him, though, is not ideology but a cool concern for the bottom line—and the belief that the media should be treated like any other business, not as a semi-sacred public trust. The Bush Administration agrees. Rupert Murdoch has seen the future, and it is him

THE AGE OF MURDOCH

BY JAMES FALLOWS

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No civics text has the stomach to describe Washington's "wait in line" industry. When a famous witness is to appear before a committee of Congress, or a famous case is to be argued at the Supreme Court, tourists imagine they can drop in to watch; but they discover that the line for admission formed well before dawn. Professionals in town—lawyers, lobbyists—can't afford to be left out, especially if clients' money is at stake. So they hire services to do the waiting for them. On the days of big events, lines resembling those outside soup kitchens or for-pay blood banks snake through marble corridors in House and Senate office buildings and spill out onto the sidewalk long before most staffers show up for work. At 9:45 or so, for the typical 10:00 A.M. committee hearing, taxis and town cars begin depositing passengers who have come from breakfast or early meetings at their firms. The paid placeholders hold up little signs with names on them, like limo drivers greeting arrivals at an airport, and the switch occurs. Someone with wild hair or wearing several sweatshirts leaves his place in line or his seat in the hearing room, and someone in a nice suit steps in. Economically the arrangement makes sense, but it's a little too crass a reminder of the different standing of citizens before their democratic government.

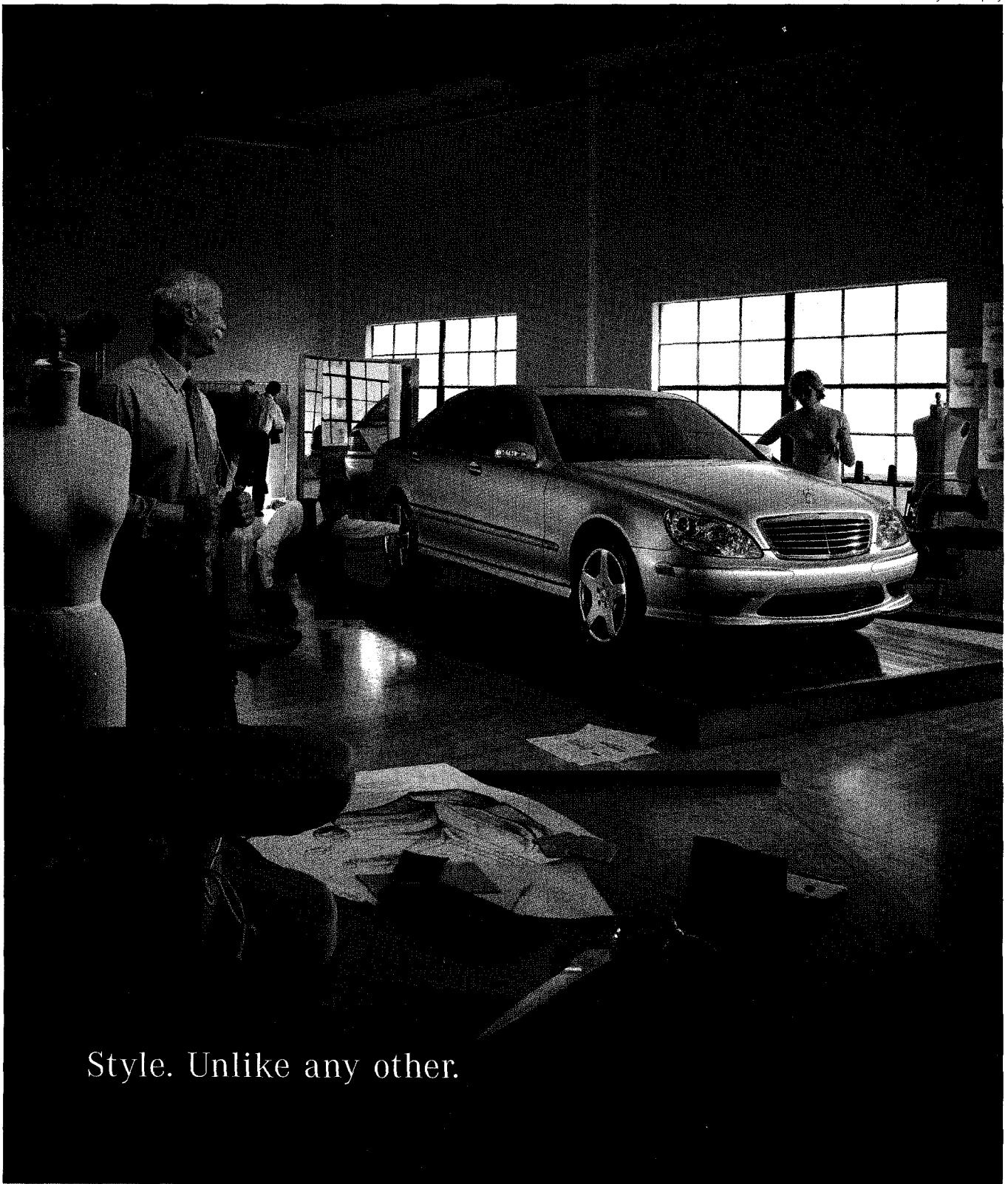
A line formed outside the Russell Senate Office Building early one morning this May, in anticipation of a session that would combine glamour and money. Congress was beginning to pay attention to pending changes in the rules that restrict the number of radio and TV stations a person or company may own. The proposed revisions were highly technical, but if the changes went through, they would provoke a wave of buying, selling, and consolidation in the media business. In particular they would allow, and therefore presumably encourage, a large number of mergers or takeovers among newspapers and TV stations. Supporters argued that this would be economically efficient and productive, opponents that it would give too much power to too few companies. A Senate committee chaired by John McCain had summoned several expert witnesses to discuss the implications of the changes that morning, along with a man who was not directly involved in the debate but who seemed to personify media power: Rupert Murdoch.

At this hearing, as in most of his public appearances, Murdoch would dismiss the idea that he is anything like a media "baron" or that the holdings of his company, News Corporation, constitute an "empire"—a term he dislikes. The company is generally referred to as "News" or "News

Corp"; politicians often pronounce the name "News Core," as if it were akin to the Peace Corps or the Marine Corps. Its main holdings are the Fox broadcast networks and Fox News, Fox Sports, FX, and other Fox cable channels in the United States; 20th Century Fox studios; thirty-five local U.S. TV stations; the *New York Post* plus *The Times* and *The Sun* of London; the conservative magazine *The Weekly Standard*; the publishing house HarperCollins; the Sky satellite system in England and the Star satellite system in Asia; the Los Angeles Dodgers, which News Corp is selling; and various publications in Murdoch's native Australia. In addition, Murdoch is now seeking federal approval to buy a one-third share in DirecTV, the leading satellite-broadcast system in North America.

To someone not named Murdoch, this might sound like a lot. But Rupert Murdoch frequently points out that the three established TV networks in the United States are part of conglomerates much larger than his. Last year the total revenues of News Corp were about \$17 billion. CBS belongs to Viacom, which also owns Paramount Pictures, Simon & Schuster, Blockbuster, Infinity radio, and so on, with total revenues of \$25 billion. ABC is part of Disney, with revenues of \$26 billion. NBC is owned by General Electric, whose total revenues were \$131 billion. Murdoch's upstart Fox News Channel, founded in 1996, has for more than a year consistently beaten the better-known CNN (founded in 1980) in cable-news rankings. CNN is part of the AOL Time Warner combine, whose revenues last year, despite the historic AOL collapse, were \$42 billion—two and a half times News Corp's.

So Murdoch didn't represent the biggest media company, or even one that was directly affected by the proposed changes in ownership rules. His share in DirecTV would involve legal and regulatory issues different from the ones Congress was discussing. But Murdoch was the media heavyweight the politicians wanted to hear from, because News Corp and Fox are personal companies in a way that other networks have not been since the days of William S. Paley and "General" David Sarnoff. Murdoch and his relatives control some 30 percent of all News Corp shares, through a family trust called Cruden Investments. That stake is worth about \$12 billion at News Corp's current market capitalization. Because of his role as owner, and also his market success, Murdoch's reign has been long and unchallenged in a way not seen for the past few decades, during which CBS and NBC (the networks Paley and Sarnoff founded), and most of



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the rest of the media world, became the province of corporations. Jack Welch was in charge of GE for more than two decades, and Michael Eisner has run Disney for nearly that long. But neither of them can expect to stay in command as long as they're physically able, which Murdoch clearly intends to do. And unlike Paley and Sarnoff, whose familial power died with them, Murdoch has planned his succession.

Whether or not News Corp is an empire, functionally it is a dynasty. At seventy-two, Murdoch is four years older than Welch—but twenty-two years younger than his own mother, Dame Elisabeth Greene Murdoch, who as of this summer was still active in Australia. (Murdoch is said to have remarked when he heard that Britain's Queen Mother had succumbed at 102, "An early death!") His father died at sixty-seven, after heart and prostate problems. After a prostate-cancer scare three years ago, Murdoch became a diet-and-fitness enthusiast. His third wife, Wendi Deng, is thirty-five. His fifth child, Grace, is not yet two, and a sixth child is on the way. He has two older daughters—Prudence, age forty-five, and Elisabeth, thirty-five—and two sons. Lachlan, thirty-two, is the deputy chief of operations at News Corp. James, who will turn thirty-one late this year, runs the Star satellite business in Asia. For several years Murdoch has been indicating that one of the sons—prob-

who had asked him to appear. Senators carry themselves as if waiting to be noticed. Murdoch eased into the hearing room as if hoping not to make a stir. He was wearing a plain dark suit and not-very-stylish large glasses. His face is heavily lined; his hair is thin and combed straight back; he is of medium build. He would not stand out in a crowd. Nonetheless, TV cameras immediately surrounded him, and senators came down from behind the podium to shake his hand.

Murdoch gave a brief, upbeat opening statement that was almost identical to what he had told a different congressional committee two weeks earlier: "We have a long and successful history of defying conventional wisdom and challenging market leaders ... We started as a small newspaper company and grew by providing competition and innovation in stale, near monopolistic markets." When asked about the topic of the hearing, the new rules for media ownership, he said, to appreciative laughter, "I don't have a dog in that fight." He was being cute: although unaffected by the specific measure under discussion, he obviously supported a general relaxation of rules. Then he responded tersely but with a wry edge to what the senators, especially the Democrats, were really asking: whether he had become too powerful for the world's good.

"I think of it in Pentagon terms," says one longtime media analyst. "Rupert is the first one to have put together an Army, an Air Force, a Navy, and a Marine Corps. If you're the Iraqis, it's a bitch to compete with."

ably Lachlan but perhaps James, depending on how he does in the next few years at Star—or both jointly will succeed him at News Corp.

Several years ago I ended up, to my shock, sitting across from Murdoch at a long restaurant table at a crowded technology conference. He said hello and asked my name, went back to finishing his meal, and in general didn't behave as if I should be in awe of him. We discussed nothing of substance on that occasion, and News Corp officials told me not even to dream of interviewing Murdoch for this article. I was able to watch him testify and speak to groups several times, and I interviewed people who have worked or still work closely with or who have competed against him. All the associates and employees I reached, and most of the business rivals, refused even to meet for a discussion unless I agreed not to use their names. The Fox News organization is under blanket orders not to talk to the press unless pre-cleared. I did not manage to get anyone at Fox to admit the incongruity of a news organization's taking this stance.

Billionaires, based on the seven-person sample I've had the chance to observe, tend to be either superpolite and ostentatiously respectful or the reverse. Murdoch is in the polite camp. When he stepped into the Senate hearing room, his personal bearing set him apart from the senators

Ernest Hollings, of South Carolina, a Democrat in his eighties who often makes folksy remarks, held up a long list of companies controlled by News Corp to counter Murdoch's self-portrayal as a small fish in the media sea. The list ran to a full ten pages. Hollings drawled, "I wish I could buy some stock in this thing."

"Any day," Murdoch deadpanned (the company is, after all, listed on the New York Stock Exchange), bringing laughter from everyone but Hollings. Murdoch then gave a discursive answer about his holdings that lasted until a light turned red in front of Hollings, signaling that his time for questions was up. "Your lawyer is good!" Hollings told Murdoch. "Your answer went past the red light." Then, thinking that the microphone was turned off, sounding both exasperated and impressed, he muttered "Jesus!"

What about the imbalance of political views on talk radio and many cable TV channels? asked Byron Dorgan, a Democrat from North Dakota. Murdoch repeated his standard claim that his news organizations always strove to be "fair and balanced." Then could he explain the fact that radio had 300-plus hours of nationally syndicated conservative talk each week, versus five hours of liberal talk?

"Yes," Murdoch said with a twinkle. "Apparently, conservative talk is more popular." As if aware that he might have

STEVEN HARRIS/POLARIS

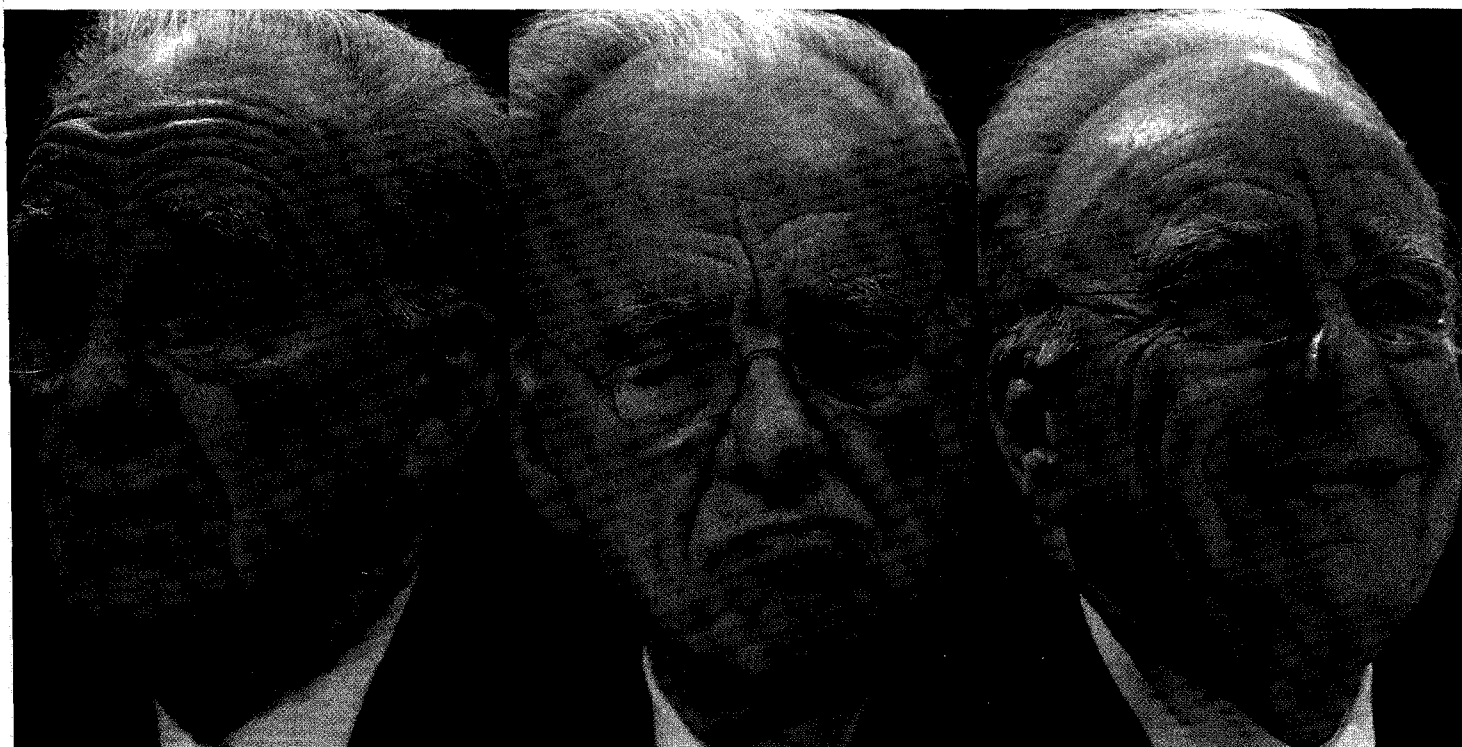
needlessly shown up Dorgan, Murdoch added, in charmer mode, "If we could find a popular, amusing broadcaster to talk for an hour or two every day and he was a liberal, we'd have him on like a shot." Senator Dorgan, Murdoch said, was "doing very well" in his tryout for the job.

Barbara Boxer, a Democrat from California, pointed out that Murdoch's *New York Post* had introduced the label "Axis of Weasels" for France and Germany, and that his Fox News had enthusiastically repeated and amplified the message. Didn't this show that one man could become his own media echo chamber? She then asked, "Do you believe there should be any limits—at all—on how much media one individual or one company can control?" The result was a David Mamet-style dialogue.

the question is how much? And that's—you're saying you can't put a number on it.

MURDOCH: There should be no limit to diversity.
(Laughter.)

For all the surreal, ultimately pointless show-trial aspects of the session, there was a larger historical logic to the meeting between Murdoch (who must have left the room thinking *They didn't lay a glove on me*) and the forces of government that day. Two great and opposing conceptions of the press and its role in public life had just collided. One of them holds that the press is basically different from other businesses: the unique protection it enjoys under the First Amendment gives it unique responsibilities to serve the



MURDOCH: I don't know what the right limits are, but I'm certainly in favor of relaxing the existing limits, Senator.

BOXER: You're in favor of relaxing the limits! ... Well, what if you owned everything?

MURDOCH: If I owned *everything*?

BOXER: Do you think there ought to be limits on you?

MURDOCH: No, of course not. And we don't—

BOXER: You think there should be limits?

MURDOCH: I think there should be competition everywhere. My life has been built, and my business, [by] starting competition and starting up against—

BOXER: So we've gotten this far.

MURDOCH: —other people and providing diversity.

BOXER: So we've gotten this far. So you agree there should be limits. And the—

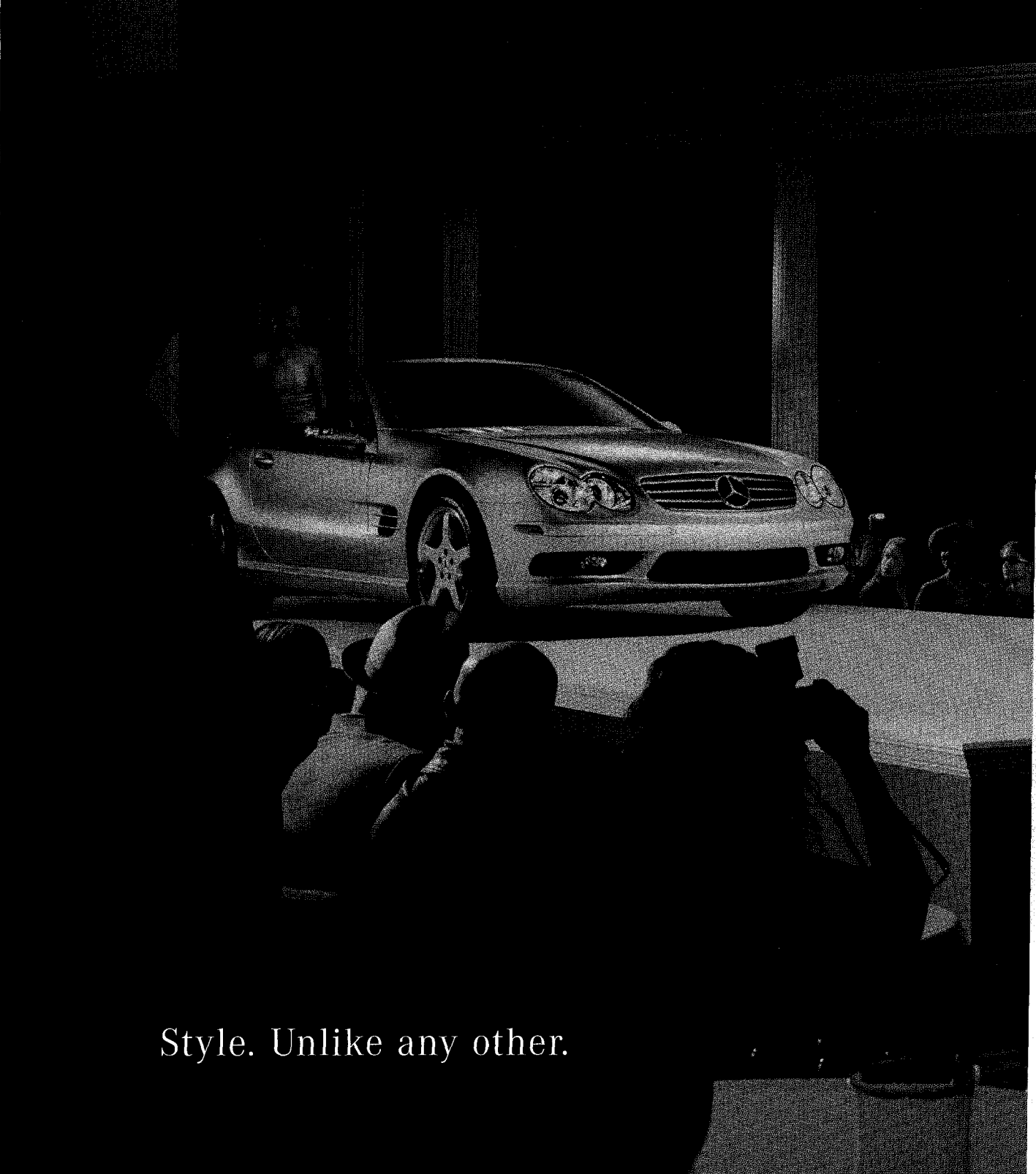
MURDOCH: I think there should always be diversity.

BOXER: Good. Limits and diversity. We agree. So then

public interest. The other holds that the news business is basically the same as other businesses. The second version—the Murdoch version—has now won, and Murdoch deserves to move from "controversial" to "visionary" status.

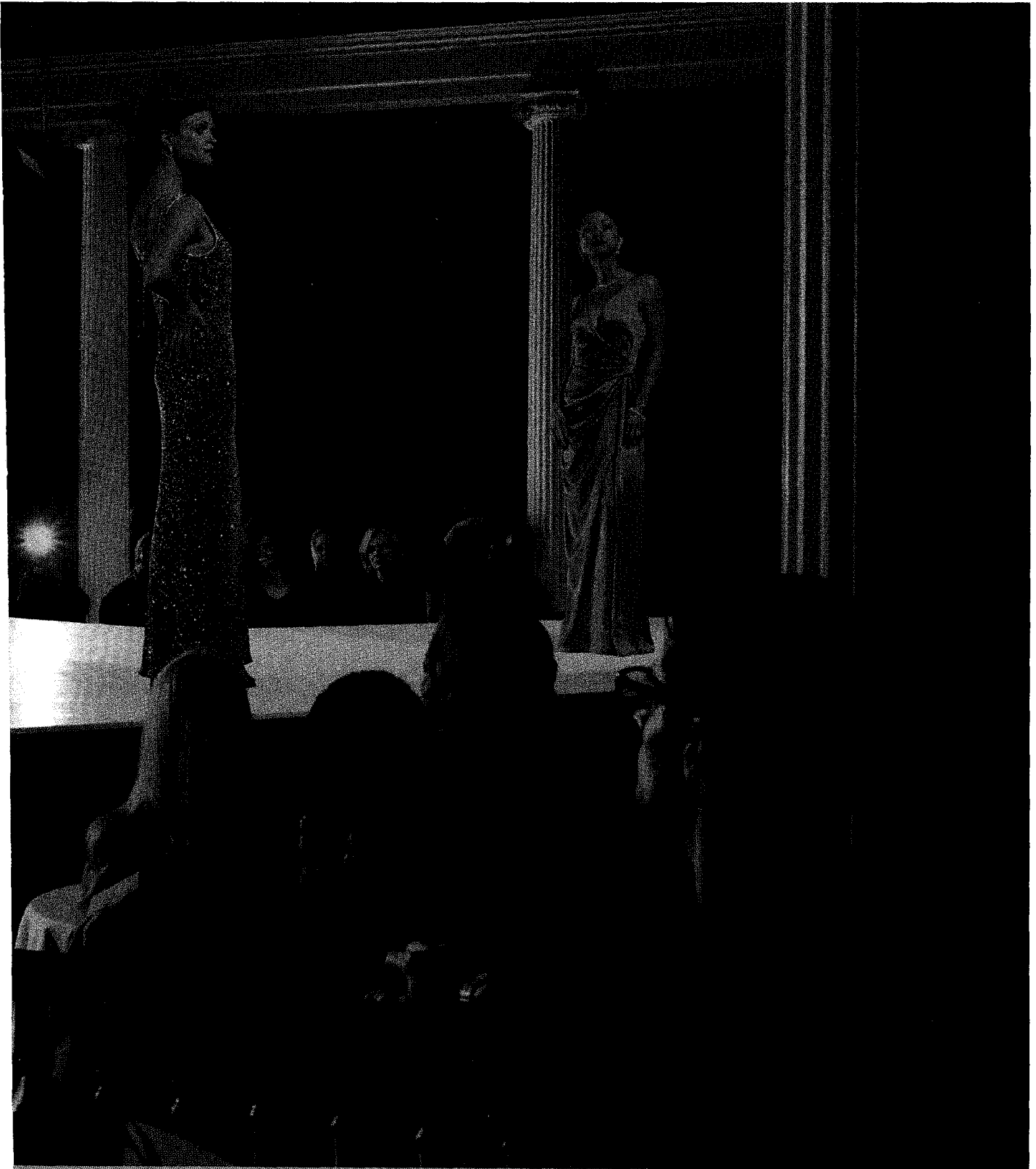
It is thanks largely to Joseph Pulitzer, who invented a new kind of journalism in the late 1800s, that newspapers moved from the open partisanship of an earlier era to a pretense of objectivity today. Henry Luce transformed magazine journalism before World War II with *Time*, *Fortune*, and *Life*. After the war a handful of television-news pioneers created the documentary form, the evening newscast, the Sunday talk show, and other staples. Then TV news changed again, starting in the late 1970s, through the efforts of, among others, Roone Arledge, of ABC, who made news profitable; Ted Turner, of CNN, who made the news cycle continuous; and Larry King and Geraldo Rivera, who merged news and entertainment.

Rupert Murdoch is this era's influential figure. His hold-



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ings have grown surprisingly fast, over a surprisingly long period of time. The cartoon explanation of his success is that he is ruthless or power-mad or even today's Hitler, as his former friend and current antagonist Ted Turner has called him. The real explanation is that he has combined several crucial ingredients—an instinct for mass taste, an appreciation of technology, a concept of strategic business structure, and a knack for exploiting political power—in a new and uniquely effective way. His is not the largest media company, but it is now the model to beat—or to imitate.

A TASTE FOR RISK AND CONTENTION

Rupert Murdoch was born into a newspaper family, but one far less established than those of his near contemporaries Arthur ("Punch") Sulzberger Sr., of *The New York Times*, and Otis Chandler, of the *Los Angeles Times*. (Both are a few years older than Murdoch, and both are retired.) Murdoch's father, Keith, was the son of a Presbyterian minister who had emigrated from Scotland to Australia in the 1880s. Early in life Keith decided that he wanted to be a reporter. After an apprenticeship in his home town, Melbourne, his big break came during World War I. He took part in an early version of "embedding" with Australian and New Zealand troops at Gallipoli,

Keith Murdoch put this philosophy into effect when he returned to Australia. With Northcliffe's encouragement, he took over Melbourne's stagnant evening paper, the *Herald*, and revived it with racy features. Through the late 1920s he acquired other newspapers and turned them into a chain, to which he added radio stations. His son, Keith Rupert, was born in 1931. (There were also three daughters in the family.) Over the Depression decade Murdoch's newspaper and radio holdings expanded, and the family business entered a nationwide market struggle against Australia's established and respectable press dynasty, the Fairfax family, whose base was the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The Murdoch chain kept growing through the war and postwar years.

By the time young Rupert went off to Oxford, in 1950, Keith was in his mid-sixties, sick, withdrawing from the business, and greatly concerned about its future. While Rupert was largely frittering away his time at Oxford, his father discovered a plot led by his deputy to push him out of power within the company. "I can't die yet," Keith Murdoch said in 1952, according to Neil Chenoweth's recent book *Rupert Murdoch: The Untold Story of the World's Greatest Media Wizard*. "I've got to see my son established, not leave him like a lamb to be devoured and destroyed by these people." After Keith Murdoch's death, in the fall of 1952, company

Murdoch is usually happy with whichever show on Fox—or headline in the *Post*, or topless Page 3 model in *The Sun*—draws a big audience. He has done voice-overs for an appearance on *The Simpsons* in the role of a grasping plutocrat.

where he assured the commanding general that what he saw would remain confidential. In violation of that assurance, he then wrote a bitter letter to the Australian Prime Minister about conditions for ANZAC (Australia and New Zealand Army Corps) troops. Eventually the general was recalled, the troops were withdrawn, and Keith Murdoch, age thirty, became known as a man who could rock the boat. "Oh, sure, it may not have been fair," Rupert Murdoch told an interviewer, Gerard Henderson, in 1989. "But it changed history, that letter."

The rest of Keith Murdoch's rise in journalism had a similarly scrappy, anti-elite quality. He went to London and learned the techniques of mass marketing from Alfred Harmsworth, who became Lord Northcliffe, the Fleet Street genius of the time. As William Shawcross points out in *Murdoch: The Making of a Media Empire* (1997), a respectful and authoritative biography of Rupert Murdoch, Northcliffe's papers introduced many of the irresistibly vulgar come-ons associated with London tabloids—and, now, with the Fox network and the *New York Post*. A typical headline would read "DO DOGS COMMIT MURDER?" or "WHY JEWS DON'T RIDE BICYCLES." "A newspaper," Northcliffe told his acolytes, "is to be made to pay. Let it deal with what interests the mass of people. Let it give the public what it wants."

rivalries and disputes broke into the open, and the family's holdings were greatly reduced. Keith Murdoch had stated in his will that he hoped Rupert would "have the great opportunity of spending a useful, altruistic, and full life in newspaper and broadcasting activities"—that is, would succeed him in control of the company. But the company Rupert inherited, now called News Limited, was battered and troubled. Most of what is said about Rupert Murdoch and his operations was said about Keith Murdoch as well: that despite his great influence he always felt at odds with a respectable elite; that he understood himself to be running a family business; that he believed controversy was beneficial and understanding mass taste was indispensable. But Rupert Murdoch was also motivated to rebuild a family business that his father had created and partially lost.

Between the young Rupert Murdoch who took over an Australian family business in the early 1950s and today's globally recognized symbol of media power is a path described in hundreds of articles and numerous books. In reading through the vast public record, I was surprised to be reminded of how many dustups Murdoch has been involved in. He has been like Zelig, seemingly everywhere that important changes in media were taking place—but at the center of the action rather than the periphery.

He entered British journalism in the late 1960s and was soon in a tussle with Robert Maxwell for control of the British tabloid *News of the World*. Over the next fifteen years he mounted campaigns to take business and editorial control of the low-end *Sun* and the high-end *Times* and *Sunday Times* of London. In the mid-1980s, as Margaret Thatcher was fighting coal miners, Murdoch waged an epic battle against press unions and built an entirely new printing plant so as to operate with much cheaper labor.

He entered the U.S. newspaper world in the early 1970s, with a quiet takeover of the *San Antonio Express and News*; noisier takeovers of the *New York Post* and *New York* magazine soon followed. (It was under Murdoch that the *Post* published the great tabloid headline "HEADLESS BODY IN TOPLESS BAR.") He also owned, briefly and improbably, the *Village Voice*. To satisfy U.S. ownership requirements of the time, he applied for U.S. citizenship and was naturalized in 1985. Murdoch was forced to sell the *Post* in 1988, mainly because of the efforts of Senators Edward Kennedy and Ernest Hollings to overturn a previous waiver of ownership rules. But he bought it again, out of bankruptcy, in 1993.

His real entry into the American consciousness came with his move into television. Murdoch took over 20th Century Fox in the mid-1980s, and at about the same time announced a fanciful-sounding plan to assemble small TV stations into a fourth national network. In the late 1980s he bought the parent company of *TV Guide* and also began creating his Sky and Star satellite systems in Britain and Asia. In the early 1990s Fox Broadcasting shocked CBS by outbidding it for the rights to National Football League games—the first of many contracts that have made Fox the dominant broadcast sports network. Murdoch fell out with Ted Turner in the mid-1990s, and the two waged personal and business war. (After Turner compared Murdoch to Hitler, the *Post* ran the headline "IS TED NUTS? YOU DECIDE.") Murdoch started the Fox News Channel partly with the goal of overtaking and thus humiliating Turner's CNN.

Several striking themes recur in this saga. One is Murdoch's long-standing determination not simply to broaden News Corp's portfolio—by diversifying, for instance, into new or unrelated businesses—but to extend his strategic control of the supply and distribution channels on which his existing businesses rely. His father had moved from print to radio with the understanding that each medium could publicize and support the other. Murdoch's companies now constitute a production system unmatched in its integration. They supply content—Fox movies (*Titanic*, *The Full Monty*, *There's Something About Mary*), Fox TV shows (*The Simpsons*, *Ally McBeal*, *When Animals Attack*), Fox-controlled sports broadcasts, plus newspapers and books. They sell the content to the public and to advertisers—in newspapers, on the broadcast network, on the cable channels. And they operate the physical distribution system through which the

content reaches the customers. Murdoch's satellite systems now distribute News Corp content in Europe and Asia; if Murdoch becomes DirecTV's largest single owner, that system will serve the same function in the United States.

In his biography of Murdoch, Neil Chenoweth, who has worked for years as an investigative reporter for the *Australian Financial Review*, stresses that the DirecTV deal is valuable to Murdoch mainly as a way of ensuring wide distribution for his movies and his news, sports, and original TV programming. "We are going to see a landslide of Murdoch content produced for DirecTV and his global satellite network, and it will just blow everybody else away," he recently wrote in an e-mail. The next big wave of media consolidation, Chenoweth predicted, would be driven by other companies trying to match what Murdoch had put together.

Another constant in his career is its embattled, roller-coaster quality. Murdoch is said to be popular and admired within his own organization, rather than resented, mocked, or gossiped about behind his back. But with business rivals he is always in feuds and showdowns, and not only high-profile ones like that with Turner. He has taken big risks (one associate describes Murdoch's making, in a matter of minutes, the billion-dollar decision to back Fox News "the way you or I might order lunch"), and his business has suffered serious reverses. In 1990, in an episode vividly described by Shawcross, Murdoch was nearly forced to liquidate News Corp after a bank in Pittsburgh refused to roll over a small but crucial portion of his corporate debt. Although admirers compare him to Bill Gates or John D. Rockefeller because of his appreciation of technology and his instinct for strategic advantage, Murdoch is perhaps best compared to Bill Clinton: his nature keeps getting him into predicaments from which his talent lets him escape.

Political involvement has been one more constant in his career. The simple view of Murdoch, especially among liberals who fear him, is that he is a dangerously obsessed conservative propagandist—Richard Mellon Scaife with a job. This is imprecise. The exact nature of his political views is a subject of some debate among his associates. Overall he is of course more right- than left-wing. Murdoch likes to refer to himself as a "moderate libertarian" rather than a "conservative" or, in U.S. terms, a Republican. Two of his lieutenants—Roger Ailes, who runs the Fox News Channel, and Bill Kristol, the editor of *The Weekly Standard*—have worked in Republican Party politics. Murdoch's own involvement with the party itself, as opposed to with specific politicians who might prove useful to him, has been limited. His associates report that he has never met George W. Bush, hard as it may be to believe. He has, though, developed a respectful relationship with Bill Clinton. Each has lunched at the other's office in New York, and Murdoch came away impressed by Clinton's ability to discuss impromptu almost any issue arising almost anywhere on earth. Associates of both say that despite the political differences between the men, they clicked

because of complementary personalities: Murdoch loves to listen, and Clinton loves to talk.

The strongest element in Murdoch's conservatism is his taste for leaders who take clear, decisive, line-in-the-sand positions on important issues. That is what he admired in Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and what he respects, post-September 11, in Donald Rumsfeld and George Bush. Where he strays furthest from Republican Party orthodoxy is on social issues—gay rights, public religion, “traditional family values,” and so on. Given the vulgar-to-raunchy tone of Fox programs like *Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire* and *That '70s Show*, it would be awkward if Murdoch publicly pushed a conservative social agenda. As a personal rather than a political matter, Murdoch was known to be unhappy about the violent nihilism of the Brad Pitt movie *Fight Club*, which the Fox studios produced, and about an episode of Fox TV's recent *Married by America* in which shots of a woman's naked breasts were not digitally blurred. But he is usually happy with whichever show on Fox—or headline in the *Post*, or topless Page 3 model in the London *Sun*—draws a big audience. He is proud of *The Simpsons* for both its popularity and its wit. He has done voice-overs for a self-mocking appearance on the show, in the role of a grasping plutocrat.

The real difference between Murdoch and an activist like Scaife is that Murdoch seems to be most interested in the political connections that will help his business. A few examples of his better-known political engagements bear out this view. Soon after the 1994 elections, which made Newt Gingrich the first Republican speaker of the House in decades, Murdoch's publishing company, HarperCollins, offered Gingrich a \$4.5 million two-book deal (Gingrich was later shamed out of accepting it). Murdoch made his sweetheart offer to Gingrich only after Gingrich had gained power, not to help him on the way up.

Similarly, his notorious China “policy” is that of a deal-maker and not a conservative purist. Just before Gingrich came to power, Murdoch made a speech with the Gingrichian theme that advanced communications technology would be “an unambiguous threat to totalitarian regimes everywhere.” The Chinese government immediately banned satellite dishes, sabotaging Star TV's satellite transmissions into China. In a highly publicized and controversial series of atonements, Murdoch had his companies publish a book by Deng Xiaoping's daughter; cancel another book, about Hong Kong, that was likely to provoke the Chinese; and drop the BBC World Service, with its independent news broadcasts, from the Star TV lineup.

In 1995 Murdoch funded the creation of *The Weekly Standard* in Washington, which gave conservative writers another home. But at the same time, his papers in England were playing a significant role in the downfall of the Tory government. That same year the young Labour politician

Tony Blair came to Australia to speak at a News Corp retreat on Hayman Island in the Great Barrier Reef. His speech and general energy impressed Murdoch. Two years later the tabloid *Sun* in London plumped hard for Blair and “New Labour” in an effort to unseat John Major and the conservatives. Murdoch's British press has been as pro-Blair as his U.S. outlets were anti-Clinton through the late 1990s. The Blair government has proposed relaxing TV-ownership rules in ways that would benefit News Corp.

In short, some aspects of News Corp's programming, positions, and alliances serve conservative political ends, and others do not. But all are consistent with the use of political influence for corporate advantage. In the books I read and interviews I conducted, I found only one illustration of Murdoch's using his money and power for blatantly political ends: his funding of *The Weekly Standard*. The rest of the time he makes his political points when convenient as an adjunct to making money. But there are many examples of Murdoch's using political connections to advance his business ends. “Andrew Heyward [the head of CBS News, a Viacom subsidiary] would be allergic to the idea of attacking a politician who opposes a Viacom interest,” says a man who has competed against News Corp. “Murdoch has been shameless about using his journalism for the advancement of his business interests.” In this view, *The Weekly Standard* and the *New York Post*, neither of them profitable, are more means than ends.

CHANGING THE RULES

Murdoch's use of political power for commercial ends naturally brings us back to Washington. The dispute over ownership rules for the broadcast industry, about which Murdoch had been summoned to testify, was at face value too narrow and technical to sustain a real political debate in America. But the intense, if brief, controversy over this seemingly arcane dispute was appropriate to the long-term implications of the changes.

The most immediate and direct effect of the revised rules was likely to be on local news coverage. In as many as 180 metropolitan areas the new rules would allow the leading newspaper and the leading TV station to be owned by the same company—something that has until now been outlawed except in a few special-waiver cases. Because the leading newspaper is the only newspaper in the great majority of cities, the new rules would mean that in all but the very largest American cities one news organization could dominate. Supporters of the changes said that this might free resources for better programming—and that other sources of information, whether the Internet or national TV and print outlets, would ensure diversity and competition. Opponents said that the new rules would concentrate press power unacceptably, first at the local level and then nationally: other proposed changes would also permit the formation of larger nationwide chains.

Other than during a few weeks in May and early June, the dispute drew little coverage from the national media. Opponents said, 'This proves our point! Because most large media companies stood to profit from the changes, they of course devoted much less space to them than to, say, the Laci Peterson murder case. John McCain, who sometimes seemed to support the changes and sometimes did not, observed acidly at a hearing in May that newspaper editorial policies conveniently tend to follow the newspaper's economic interest. In a *Washington Post* story Frank Ahrens reported that at one hearing McCain reminded a lobbyist for the newspaper industry that during a Clinton-era regulatory fight all the newspapers that editorialized in favor of a certain rule change were owned by companies that would have benefited from it, and all the papers that editorialized against it were owned by companies that would not.

Beyond its immediate impact on local news and on media-business prospects, the debate symbolized a historic shift in concepts guiding the business of journalism. The shift is back to the idea of journalism as principally a business—and away from an idea promoted over the past seventy years by the Federal Communications Commission.

Murdoch often gives James and Lachlan, the two of his children with major management positions, life coaching on the phone. "Well, darling, it's okay," he might say, and then go on to impart what he has learned from similar challenges.

The FCC is in a way the most futuristic arm of the government. The operating agreements that govern the structure of today's Internet and tomorrow's wireless networks are generally thrashed out there. But the official seal that hangs over the FCC's hearing rooms is almost comically retro, with an eagle circling crudely drawn radio transmission towers while holding lightning bolts in its talons. It reflects not just the artistic style but also the technological attainments at the time of the agency's creation, as part of the early New Deal, in 1934. One of the FCC's most important, and most anomalous, functions was rooted in Depression-era technology and is now undergoing inevitable and painful change.

The anomaly was the FCC's ability to regulate news coverage. The First Amendment's stricture that "Congress shall make no law" that might abridge "freedom of speech, or of the press" has effectively kept the government away from newspaper regulation. Apart from special circumstances involving libel or wartime national-security concerns, what newspapers and magazines decide to publish has been strictly up to them.

Broadcasting—which emerged as an important news medium in the 1920s, with radio, and as the leading news source in the 1950s, with TV—differs in one fundamental

way from print. In theory, anyone can start a new publication, but the nature of the electromagnetic spectrum means that only so many broadcast TV or radio channels can co-exist. Since the 1930s the FCC has therefore administered an underappreciated news-management policy. It awards licenses for local broadcast stations, and for combinations of stations into networks. These are effectively licenses to make money. Lyndon Johnson's route to wealth during his years in Congress, for instance, was based on his family's role as the radio and TV licensee for KTBC (now KLBJ) in Austin.

In exchange for this lucrative right, broadcast licensees—and their news operations—have been subject to rules that affect no other part of the press. Their licenses are up for renewal every few years. At least in theory, the FCC will grant a renewal only if the licensee proves that it is serving the public interest with the programming it offers. Broadcasters can't use foul language or be too risqué. This was the basis for George Carlin's famous "Seven Dirty Words" routine, about the words flatly outlawed by the FCC, and it is the reason that *Oz* and *The Sopranos* cannot appear on broadcast TV. Until the rules were relaxed, in the Reagan era, broadcasters had to apply a "fairness doctrine" in their coverage of political issues. Under the rules up for recon-

sideration this summer broadcasters couldn't own a large number of stations, or newspapers in the same cities where they had TV stations, so the political influence that comes with their favored, licensed position would be kept within bounds. They have had to offer children's programming and respond to local concerns.

Broadcasters are in the news business but have been treated like a public utility, with public responsibilities. The most famous words ever spoken by an FCC chairman were those of Newton Minow, who told the National Association of Broadcasters in 1961 that television programming amounted to "a vast wasteland." "I am here to uphold and protect the public interest," he said. "Some say the public interest is merely what interests the public. *I disagree.*"

None of these rules, as rules, applied to the nonbroadcast press. But at the time of Minow's speech the idea behind them did: that the press enjoyed unusual privileges and therefore had unusual responsibilities. "Our republic and its press will rise or fall together," Joseph Pulitzer wrote in 1904, in words now engraved by the entrance to the Columbia Journalism School. "A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself." With allowances for fancy rhetoric, this admonition guided news operations through most of the twentieth century.

In the world beyond the FCC's purview the idea that the news business differed from other businesses had started to erode as early as the 1970s. The process involved "infotainment," corporate mergers, pressure for greater profits, and other well-known phenomena. The change within the FCC has been more distinct, though less publicized, and it is the background to this summer's drama.

Ronald Reagan's first chairman of the FCC, Mark Fowler, removed many of the controls on what radio stations could air. Before the mid-1980s Sunday-morning schedules on radio stations were laden with dutiful public-affairs and religious programs; after the controls were lifted, stations could air whatever they thought the market wanted. Fowler indicated that the same reasoning might apply to television. He is responsible for the second most famous utterance by an FCC chairman: TV, he said, was only a "toaster with pictures"—that is, a commodity requiring product-safety regulation but nothing more. Fowler's FCC also enabled Murdoch to create a fourth major network, Fox, by approving his acquisition of local TV stations.

A more dramatic change came in the following decade, when a Democratic FCC, chaired by an antitrust lawyer and close friend of Al Gore's named Reed Hundt, worked with a Republican Congress to pass the Telecommunications Act

liberal judges and views. Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas both came to the Supreme Court from the D.C. Circuit (as did the more liberal Ruth Bader Ginsburg). Robert Bork was on this circuit when Ronald Reagan nominated him to the Supreme Court. Douglas Ginsburg, now the D.C. Circuit's chief judge, was nominated by Reagan for the Supreme Court and would in all probability have been confirmed had it not been for controversy over his admitted marijuana use in the 1960s and 1970s, which caused him to withdraw. Another judge on the court, David Sentelle, is a former aide to Jesse Helms and was part of the three-judge panel that selected Kenneth Starr as the special prosecutor.

The judges on this circuit had a chance to examine clause 202(h) when several media companies sued the FCC to overturn limits on their expansion, merger, and cross-ownership plans. In two influential rulings issued last year, the D.C. Circuit Court ruled for the companies and against the FCC. Unless the FCC could prove the need to maintain its regulations, specifically the limits on cross-ownership, it had to change or remove the controls forthwith. In his ruling on one of the cases, *Fox Television Stations v. FCC*, Chief Judge Ginsburg wrote that some people may have imagined that Congress intended the FCC to take an "incremental"

For at least a century newspaper and broadcasting companies have been expected to serve interests beyond the purely commercial. The recent FCC changes give them a governmental mandate to behave purely as businesses.

of 1996. This was arguably the most important economic event of the Clinton era: its effects have been greater than NAFTA's, and they will clearly last longer than the brief achievement of eliminating the federal budget deficit. The act was a top-to-bottom reconsideration of FCC policies that has had dramatic consequences, foreseen and not, for the mobile-phone industry, telephone companies, Internet-based businesses, and many other firms.

For our purposes, what mattered about this bill was clause 202(h). These few lines instructed the FCC to review every two years its rules limiting media ownership—and to "repeal or modify" any rule that "it determines to be no longer in the public interest." These words could mean a lot of things—including not very much, if they were interpreted as instructing the FCC to stick with rules unless there was flagrant evidence of their pointlessness. But new players entered the drama: the judges of the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, and a man who had once been law clerk to one of them—a man who would be the lead player in the next act. In their collective view, clause 202(h) was full of possibilities.

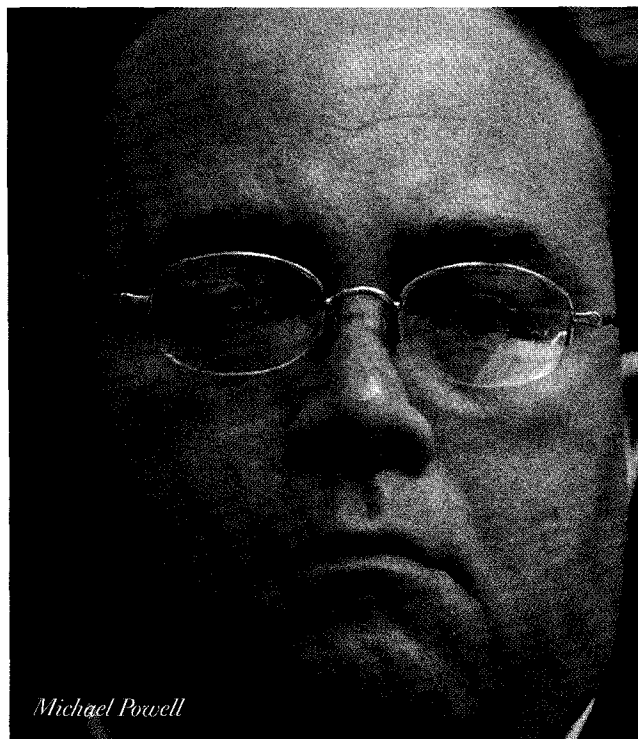
The D.C. Circuit, which is of great importance as the venue for most suits against federal agencies, has recently been a source of conservative intellectual energy, as the Ninth Circuit, on the West Coast, has been a stronghold of

approach to relaxing ownership rules. But they couldn't be more wrong. "The mandate of § 202(h)," he wrote, "might better be likened to Farragut's order at the battle of Mobile Bay. ('Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!')"

Some lawyers and legal scholars say that what the court was asking—all it could properly ask, despite Ginsburg's breezy remarks—was that the FCC do more to explain and defend its rules, such as those that kept the dominant newspaper in a city from buying the dominant TV station. "One way to respond to that sort of decision would be to go out and get proof that the limits are serving interests consistent with the First Amendment," Lawrence Lessig, of Stanford's law school, recently told me. He pointed out that the Supreme Court's rulings in this area have given the FCC considerable leeway to apply ownership rules. By this logic the FCC could have responded to the *Fox* ruling not by removing its ownership limits but by more fully explaining the rationale for them. If companies filed another suit, and if the D.C. Circuit Court sided with them yet again, the FCC could in principle appeal to the Supreme Court. Robert Pitofsky, a law professor at Georgetown University who was the chairman of the Federal Trade Commission during the Clinton Administration, says, "The courts were asking for a greater burden of proof. This didn't mean you have to throw all the rules out."

It did not look that way to the man who had to decide whether to fight the rulings: the chairman of the FCC, Michael Powell.

Powell, who turned forty this year, is Secretary of State Colin Powell's son. He is just under six feet tall and squarely built, with a somewhat high voice. By the time he graduated from William and Mary, in 1985, his father was already famous. Like his father, Michael went into the Army out of college—but two years later, when he was serving with an armored unit in Germany, he was gravely injured in a Jeep accident and hospitalized for a year. He left the Army and eventually enrolled in Georgetown's law school. After graduation, in 1993, he became a clerk for Harry Edwards, then the chief judge of the D.C. Circuit. Later he worked as



an antitrust lawyer, and then served as an FCC commissioner; he became the agency's chairman in 2001.

"In some ways this is such a silly debate," Powell said when I asked him about assertions that the D.C. Circuit Court had not actually forced him to dismantle the ownership rules. "Let me put this in perspective. I clerked on that court. For the chief judge of that circuit! I bring, in my opinion, some credibility to the question. But put aside that selfish point—" He then went on to argue that anyone who really understood how courts work would know that the FCC was indeed being told to get rid of its rules. "It's not the fact that we lost that case. It's the basis on which the court relied in saying we lost that matters ... If you really, honestly read those cases, you understand that the status quo [maintaining the ownership rules] becomes extraordinarily vulnerable."

A reader of his transcribed words might not be surprised to learn that people who dislike Powell consider him aloof and conceited. In person he did not strike me that way. He seemed affable and engaging—but eager to explain the rightness of his views, as if disagreement must be rooted in either emotion or illogic. This is an approach I associate with theoretical economists. Like them, Powell punctuates his explanations with "Let's be honest about this" or "Once you move past the subjectivity and emotions ..." With great nuance he laid out his case for relaxing ownership controls on the media. With less nuance the argument boils down to two big ideas:

First, cable TV, satellite TV, Internet news sites and blogs, and countless other data sources give modern Americans more choices about information than any previous society has enjoyed. Therefore, rules to ensure competition among broadcast stations matter much less than they used to.

Second, complaints about overconcentrated media are really complaints about what's on the air—and the content of news or entertainment should not be the government's concern. "Either you don't see enough of something you like, or you see too much of something you don't," Powell said. "But at the end of the day you have to ask whether you want three out of five unelected regulators"—that is, a majority on the FCC—"saying, I want the public to see this but not that." The market for news may not be perfect, but the government should be very reluctant to interfere with what people like to watch.

What's significant about these views? They lead logically to the conclusion that the news business is basically like all other businesses, and should therefore be regulated in the way the rest are—that is, the government protects against price-gouging, fraud, and other run-of-the-mill economic abuses, but ends its oversight there. The idea that press responsibility begins and ends with attracting a market has historical precedents. It was the lesson young Keith Murdoch learned from the tabloid genius Lord Northcliffe: give the public what it wants. But for at least a century newspaper and broadcasting companies were expected to serve interests beyond the purely commercial. That is what made news different from entertainment. Entertainment's only purpose is to be popular. News is supposed to be as popular as it can while also introducing readers or viewers to thoughts, problems, and opportunities that affect them. American news companies have for a number of years been moving toward just-a-business operating principles. The FCC changes give them a governmental mandate.

The circumstances of the FCC's rules changes were noisy, amusing, instructive, and embarrassing, often all at once. Michael Powell thought he had things under control. More than a year ago, after he had read the D.C. Circuit Court rulings, he told Congress that he would launch a new study to see how many ownership rules the

FCC could and should relax. He said that new rules should be ready for an FCC vote this past spring. Through most of its history the FCC has operated with little or no attention from the general press, and Powell could well have expected these changes to sail through too.

But complications arose, unusually baroque even for Washington. The FCC normally has a three-two majority in favor of the party that controls the White House, and there are two other Republican commissioners serving with Powell. But all three of the Republicans are young enough to think that other important political jobs may still be ahead of them, and their personal ambitions seemed to explain more than did simple partisanship.

Michael Powell had been considered one of the Republican Party's future stars—at least until early this year, when he ran up against another potential star, a new Republican commissioner named Kevin Martin. Martin is not quite four years younger than Powell, but he looks as if he could be in Powell's freshman seminar. A lawyer from North Carolina who was student-body president at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Martin is sometimes called Harry Potter at the FCC, because of his glasses and hairdo. The better comparison is to Ralph Reed, formerly of the Christian Coalition, who also

Martin both seemed certain to vote for the changed rules, albeit for different reasons. "Michael will always go with his analysis of the issue, and Kevin will go with the politics," an aide who works with both men says, referring in Martin's case to personal ambition as well as party politics. Powell genuinely believed that the D.C. Circuit rulings made changes inevitable. Martin knew that a majority vote was important to the Bush Administration—and he must have understood politically that the issue, already attracting public debate, would only become more controversial the longer it was left unresolved. The third Republican commissioner, Kathleen Abernathy, who had been faultlessly loyal to Powell and was assumed to want to succeed him, was also going to vote for the rules changes.

But while the two Democratic commissioners—Michael Copps, a former aide to Ernest Hollings, and Jonathan Adelstein, a former aide to Tom Daschle—traveled around the country holding hearings to oppose the changes, or at least to delay the vote, Kevin Martin deftly got out of the way. On interview shows and in congressional testimony Michael Powell became the face of what William Safire, in *The New York Times*, called the "round-heeled FCC." During and after broad and wounding attacks for a policy Martin favored—attacks that may well have

Murdoch would rather be tortured than spend a weekend in the Hamptons. He is hypersensitive to criticism of his business judgment but laughs off complaints about his political or cultural role as mewls from the chattering classes.

seemed too unlined to have survived long political wars. Martin joined the Bush campaign in the summer of 1999 and helped to manage its Florida-recount strategy after the election; his wife succeeded Mary Matalin as Dick Cheney's communications adviser. They are considered a very well connected young Republican couple.

Early this year Martin weakened and embarrassed Powell by voting against him and joining the Democrats to defeat an important part of Powell's program for telephone deregulation. The essential question was whether regulators in each state could continue to apply price limits and other rules to the "Baby Bell" telephone companies. Powell argued that the limits were out of date. Martin, to widespread surprise, lined up with the two Democratic commissioners in saying that the rules were necessary to protect the consumer. His defection was mortifying to Powell—a sign that Powell could not control his troops. It didn't work out that well for Martin, either. Telecom stocks crashed after the surprise defeat of Powell's plan, leading the trade press to call Martin "the sixteen-billion-dollar boy." Powell, statesmanlike, declined to comment on the episode when I spoke with him. Martin's office canceled a long-scheduled interview on all FCC matters at the last minute, and returned no subsequent calls.

As the media-ownership decision neared, Powell and

made Powell too controversial to be a viable future candidate—Martin left few tracks.

The politics of the issue took on their strange shape through the late spring. In favor of the changes were a variety of large media organizations, especially regional newspaper powers like the *Chicago Tribune* and the Belo Corporation, owner of *The Dallas Morning News*. The big media companies—Viacom, Disney, and so on—were also in favor. When asked, Rupert Murdoch said he supported the liberalization but was mainly pushing for approval of his DirecTV deal. The Bush Administration strongly supported the changes, as did the many Republican senators and congressmen who support most forms of deregulation. One striking quality of the pro crowd was how silent it was. The White House, the Republican Party, and most of the big corporations left the arguing to Powell. Months in advance it was obvious that the rules would be changed, by a 3-2 vote. So there was no reason to waste energy or risk political exposure by arguing in public.

Meanwhile, interest groups that had nothing else in common launched letter-writing campaigns to oppose the changes. Members of the National Rifle Association mailed tens of thousands of protest postcards to the FCC. Common

Cause reported that more of its members were mobilized on this issue than on any other in decades. The National Organization for Women and the Rainbow Coalition sided with Christian fundamentalists and the Conservative Communications Center. The common strand among the protesters, according to Mark Cooper, of the Consumer Federation of America, was that all were “controversial minorities” who felt that the national press was biased against their views. The bigger and more market-minded the media conglomerates become, they argued, the harder it is for anything other than mainstream views to be heard. Even Republican senators such as Trent Lott and Wayne Allard joined most Democratic senators in protesting the changes.

Cooper was one of a group of policy activists who went from hearing to hearing challenging the technical merits of the FCC changes. He talked about the “diversity index” the FCC produced to show that there would still be plenty of competition after newspapers and TV stations combined. The formula measures the number of “media choices” each community would have after the mergers. Cooper pointed out the grotesque flaw: the index assumes that every print or broadcast “outlet” has the same amount of influence. Thus if a community went from having two competitive papers to having one dominant paper and a community newsletter, there would supposedly be no real change.

Cooper also answered an argument made often by the Republican commissioner Kathleen Abernathy: that when technology makes so many choices available, concerns about concentrated media are overblown. What does it mean, she asked rhetorically, that 75 percent of prime-time viewers watch programs produced by just four companies? “I can only presume that this means that Americans are watching these providers because they prefer their content.” To social scientists this kind of market result is known as a “revealed preference.” When I asked Cooper about this explanation, he said, “We’re talking about ‘revealed preferences’? Okay, you give me NBC’s broadcast frequencies for everything that’s on my Web page, and I’ll give them my Web page for everything they’re broadcasting. You’ll see some ‘preferences’ then.”

One of the Democratic commissioners, Jonathan Adelstein, said, “Of the hundreds of citizens I heard from directly at field hearings across the country, not one stood up to call for relaxing the rules.” The FCC order changing the rules, he said, “often equates the public interest with the economic interests of media conglomerates.” He argued that the “marketplace of ideas” was being turned into a plain old bazaar. The other Democrat, Michael Copps, said that the FCC was “outdriving the headlights,” making dramatic changes whose consequences it could not foresee.

“You know, it makes me feel extremely old to say so, but it is astonishing to see how young these guys are,” Lawrence Lessig, of Stanford, told me. (He is forty-two.) “Powell and Kevin Martin are just at the beginning of their careers, and these are such enormous decisions. The idea that this naive,

simple libertarian ideology gives you any handle on these issues is astonishing. What is essential here is pragmatism that is informed by experience and empirical measure.”

On June 2 a line of activists, reporters (including me), and paid placeholders formed early outside the FCC building to watch the long-scheduled vote on the new ownership rules. Copps and Adelstein had asked for the “customary courtesy” of a thirty-day delay in the vote. Powell said no. “Let’s be blunt,” Powell later told me. “They asked for the thirty days not for more time to consider but to stop the results from being produced. I wasn’t born yesterday.” In the spring, in an episode I did not learn about from Powell, the White House political strategist Karl Rove had met with Powell to urge him to wrap up these controversial regulatory issues as soon as he could. Powell stood on his independence as a regulator and said he couldn’t be rushed. But his principles led in the same direction the Administration sought: toward a vote with no further delay.

At 10:00 A.M. Powell gavelled the meeting to order, and the commissioners heard reports from their staff specialists about the virtues of relaxing ownership controls. Powell gave a ten-minute speech endorsing the changes, and Abernathy did the same. Copps and Adelstein each spoke twice as long in dissent. Kevin Martin briefly congratulated all sides for their hard work, said there was “strong evidence on both sides of this issue,” and said he would vote for the changes. Powell called for the “ayes.” Three hands went up. He asked for “nos,” quickly slapped down the gavel, said “The ayes have it,” and got out of his chair to leave the room. Security guards rushed toward a group of female protesters, who were dressed all in pink and had burst into song as Powell was calling the vote, and hustled them away. Out on the sidewalk Jesse Jackson and Dick Gregory were giving interviews, and other protesters were marching with placards showing a scowling Rupert Murdoch, who *faute de mieux* was the symbol of the evil consequences of the decision.

Two days after the vote all five FCC commissioners were called before John McCain’s Senate Commerce Committee to explain why they voted for rules for which there was so little identifiable support and such broad opposition. Two weeks later McCain’s committee voted to recommend that the new FCC rules be overturned.

This was symbolically important but isn’t likely to mean much. Even if a revocation measure could get through the full Senate, it would be likely to fail in the House. The chairman of the corresponding House committee, Billy Tauzin, of Louisiana, said he would not even schedule a committee hearing for the measure. Various groups promised to file lawsuits challenging the new ownership rules. Such lawsuits go first to the D.C. Circuit Court—where the outcome seems preordained—and then, if accepted for review, to the Supreme Court. The last time the Supreme Court ruled on media ownership, it gave great deference to the FCC’s judg-

ments about what limits were (and were not) necessary in the public interest. Whether it would maintain that deference or instead agree with the D.C. Circuit that such limits are largely outdated and should be reviewed is hard to predict—especially given its recent closely divided “liberal” rulings in affirmative-action and sodomy cases.

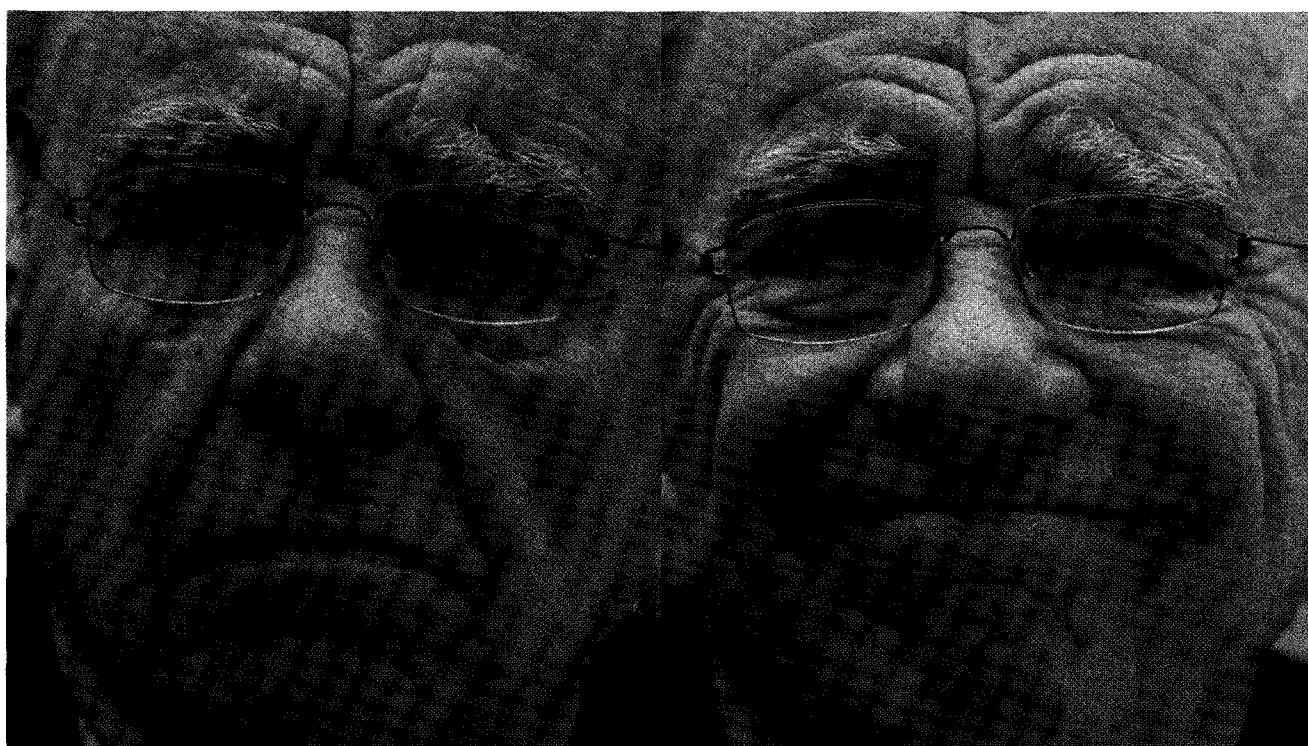
Immediately after the FCC vote the shares of media companies rose, based on the widespread expectation that most such companies would soon be either buying or getting bought. (As I left the hearing room, I walked a few paces behind the lobbyist for the Chicago Tribune Company, who had worked for months on this issue. On his first cell-phone call he asked, “How’s the stock doing?”) “Eventually you’re going to see more and more of these huge conglomerates,” Blair Levin, a former FCC official who is now a

wood on the fire. The question is what will light the spark.”

To extend the military analogy, a corporate arms race is about to begin. “The FCC ownership stuff is not all that important to Murdoch,” Neil Chenoweth told me in an e-mail. “It just helps everybody else catch up with him.”

THE NEW “NEWS” GAMUT

A few days before the FCC vote the liberal groups MoveOn.org, Common Cause, and Free Press organized a nationwide ad campaign to protest the likely result. A full-page ad ran in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other papers. The ad showed four TV screens, representing coverage on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox, and on each screen was the same glowering picture of Rupert Murdoch, looking like Big Brother. “THIS MAN



media analyst for an investment bank, told me, “because everyone’s going to need to do it to survive. I think of it in Pentagon terms. Rupert is the first one to have put together an Army, an Air Force, a Navy, and a Marine Corps. Inside the Pentagon people could argue about which force is more important and which is getting enough money. But if you’re the Iraqis, it’s a bitch to compete with.”

Levin continued with his view of the future. “The next phase after that will be the really big deals,” he said. “Who does NBC ally with? If Murdoch’s model really demonstrates the synergies of a multi-channel distribution network, with a broadcast network, with a content provider, then you may see Echostar [another satellite company] with Viacom [the parent of CBS]. The other networks will have to ask, Do we do a Comcast deal [referring to the major cable-TV system]? The change in the rules put a lot of

WANTS TO CONTROL THE NEWS IN AMERICA,” the large-type headline said. “THE FCC WANTS TO HELP HIM.” Chellie Pingree, the recently chosen president of Common Cause, told *The New York Times*, “He is the poster child of media consolidation. Who better to personify what the trends are than Rupert Murdoch?”

I talked with a News Corp official the morning the ad came out. He was exasperated by it and by the “poster child” quotation. News Corp was just a small player, he said. It had always stood for shaking up the status quo. And anyway, it didn’t care about the FCC vote. Gary Ginsberg, a senior News Corp official, said to *The New York Times* in responding to the ads, “The reality is that in the past two decades no company has brought greater choice, unlocked more monopolies and invigorated more stagnant media markets than News Corporation.”

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

Still, Pingree had a point—less about Murdoch than about the world around him. By example and by competitive threat, Murdoch was showing other companies the way ahead. What would it be like?

For people inside News Corp, it seems, not bad at all. Media organizations are dens of bitterness, intrigue, and insecurity, but News Corp seems no worse than most. Despite some fallings-out and notable firings, Murdoch's management team has been stable. The mood at Fox News seems positively jaunty, as the organization steadily overtakes CNN in the ratings with a much smaller staff. All of News Corp has an on-the-rise feel. The people I know who work at Fox News complain less than my friends in other news organizations. Murdoch will say "Sorry for interrupting" before coming into an employee's office. He is said not to yell or throw tantrums when things go wrong.

I heard several tales meant to illustrate Murdoch's reluctance to micro-manage in his empire—but I heard them in circumstances that make it difficult to determine whether they are true. Several people would, however, vouch for this incident: Benjamin Netanyahu, a longtime friend of Murdoch's, was booked on a Fox News Sunday talk show. But he got there late (offense No. 1 for a live show) because he was taping another Sunday show on

of the moment there. He is unlike Richard Nixon in seeming basically happy rather than tormented, but like him in believing that the "intellectual elite" is permanently scheming against him. Murdoch lives not on the Upper East Side but in a TriBeCa penthouse. One associate told me that Murdoch would rather be tortured than spend a weekend in the Hamptons. He is hypersensitive to criticism of his business judgment but laughs off complaints about his political or cultural role as mewls from the chattering classes.

Murdoch is known to be in close touch with his children, and he often gives James and Lachlan, the two with major management positions, life coaching on the phone. "Well, darling, it's okay," he might say, after one of them has described a recent problem, and then go on to impart what he has learned from similar challenges. The role of Murdochs within News Corp is basically similar to that of Sulzbergers within the New York Times Company, or Grahams within the Washington Post Company. In each case the family controls large blocks of stock and expects, but is not guaranteed, to run the company. One difference is that Rupert Murdoch is more purely entrepreneurial than recent Grahams or Sulzbergers have been. As a result, the business up for the next generation of Murdoch family control is currently at least six times as large as the

Frankly partisan media have never ceased to be the rule in Europe. Our journalistic culture may soon resemble that of early nineteenth-century America, in which party-owned newspapers presented selective versions of the truth.

another network (offense No. 2). The Fox News producers decreed, No more Bibi on our airwaves for a while! Netanyahu went to Murdoch and asked him to fix it. Instead of bigfooting, Murdoch told him to work it out with Brit Hume—the head of the Washington bureau. Netanyahu did, and the loyalty of the Fox staff increased.

From what I could gather in a number of off-the-record conversations with Murdoch's associates, he loves political gossip and is always calling officials to ask what they've heard, what's new. He is far more likely to use the telephone or talk in person than to send a memo. He rarely bothers with e-mail but is always interested in the details of new technology—especially the sort that can affect his business, from satellite to broadband. No one could remember Murdoch's recommending a novel to others, but he is always touting new nonfiction books—for instance, Robert Kagan's *Of Paradise and Power*, which contrasts American resolve with European weakness.

What Murdoch does pay close attention to is his divisions' finances. He looks carefully through "The Weekly Flash," a financial summary of the performance of News Corp divisions for the week and compared with the previous year. He makes lobbying calls when necessary in Washington but is not personally close to many of the big figures

Times or Post Company; it is truly global, and faces far more varied challenges.

News Corp's technological and strategic advantages are also hard for any other company, even a larger one, to replicate exactly. There are only so many major studios in Hollywood, and creating a worldwide satellite system to rival what Sky, Star, and DirecTV will give Murdoch is currently beyond any other company's reach. But even though they cannot imitate him, other companies will have to learn from him. Two principles that others can take from Murdoch's experience are his total market-mindedness and his pragmatic embrace of politics.

What the Murdoch model means in terms of content is precisely what the market will bear. In a country as big as the United States the market will support very refined and very coarse products. The gamut of Fox TV offerings, from the best to the worst on the air, indicates how wide the range can be. The writers for *The Simpsons*, the great pop-culture achievement of the late twentieth century, are fully aware of the contrast. In one episode Homer was convicted of murder, sentenced to death, and executed. Or so it seemed until the moment the switch was thrown on Ol' Sparky, when Carmen Electra

stepped out from behind a curtain to tell him that he had been a player in Fox's newest reality show, *Frame Up*.

The purely market-minded approach creates more complications when it involves the news. The Fox TV empire covers news—sort of. Like its cable-TV competitors, it really covers whatever is most attention-getting that day. If it's a war, there is very interesting coverage of that war. If there's no war, then there's almost equally intense coverage of the Laci Peterson case—or of Chandra Levy, or JonBenet Ramsey, or whatever is compulsively watchable at the moment. The old-fashioned concept of news involved some calculation of what was "important." News as a pure business has to go with what grabs attention and hope that from time to time it's important, too.

What will a Murdoch era for the press mean politically? Here's what I think, after discussing the subject with people who have worked with and worked against Murdoch. The political component in Murdoch's media operation is larger than people inside the company admit—and perhaps larger than they believe. But it is smaller than most people who dread Murdoch's influence assume. He is principally a businessman, of conventional business-conservative views, who vents those views when possible but not when they interfere with any important corporate goal. For instance, the neoconservatives at Murdoch's *Weekly Standard* harshly criticize China, but Murdoch applies the wholly conventional economics-class view that ever increasing trade with that country will mean freedom in the long run. The main political significance of a Murdoch era is that more of the press will become more openly partisan than it has been in many years.

Murdoch's operations are not openly partisan quite yet. The *New York Post* is, maybe, with its cartoon of the ostrich as France's national bird. (Contrary to widespread belief, it was neither Fox News nor the *Post* that introduced "cheese-eating surrender monkeys" as a nickname for the French. The phrase came from Groundskeeper Willie, of *The Simpsons*.) But Fox News won't be budged from its claim that it offers "fair and balanced" coverage. Roger Ailes, the head of Fox News, frequently asserts that in opinion polls 70 percent of Americans say the media are "too liberal." Set aside for a moment whether respondents actually say that—or whether they're right if they do. For Fox's purposes it leads to the conclusion, as Ailes has put it, "that we can play things down the middle and get that seventy percent, while everybody else fights over the thirty." Brit Hume, of Fox's Washington bureau, has said that the "Washington herd" all runs in one direction. "If we just step aside from the herd, it's like picking up money off the street."

Of course, the Fox establishment would hoot at the idea that NPR, *The New York Times*, or CNN was "playing things down the middle," much as those organizations would hoot at Fox's claim. Every liberal thinks that Fox is a biased right-wing outlet; every conservative thinks the converse about

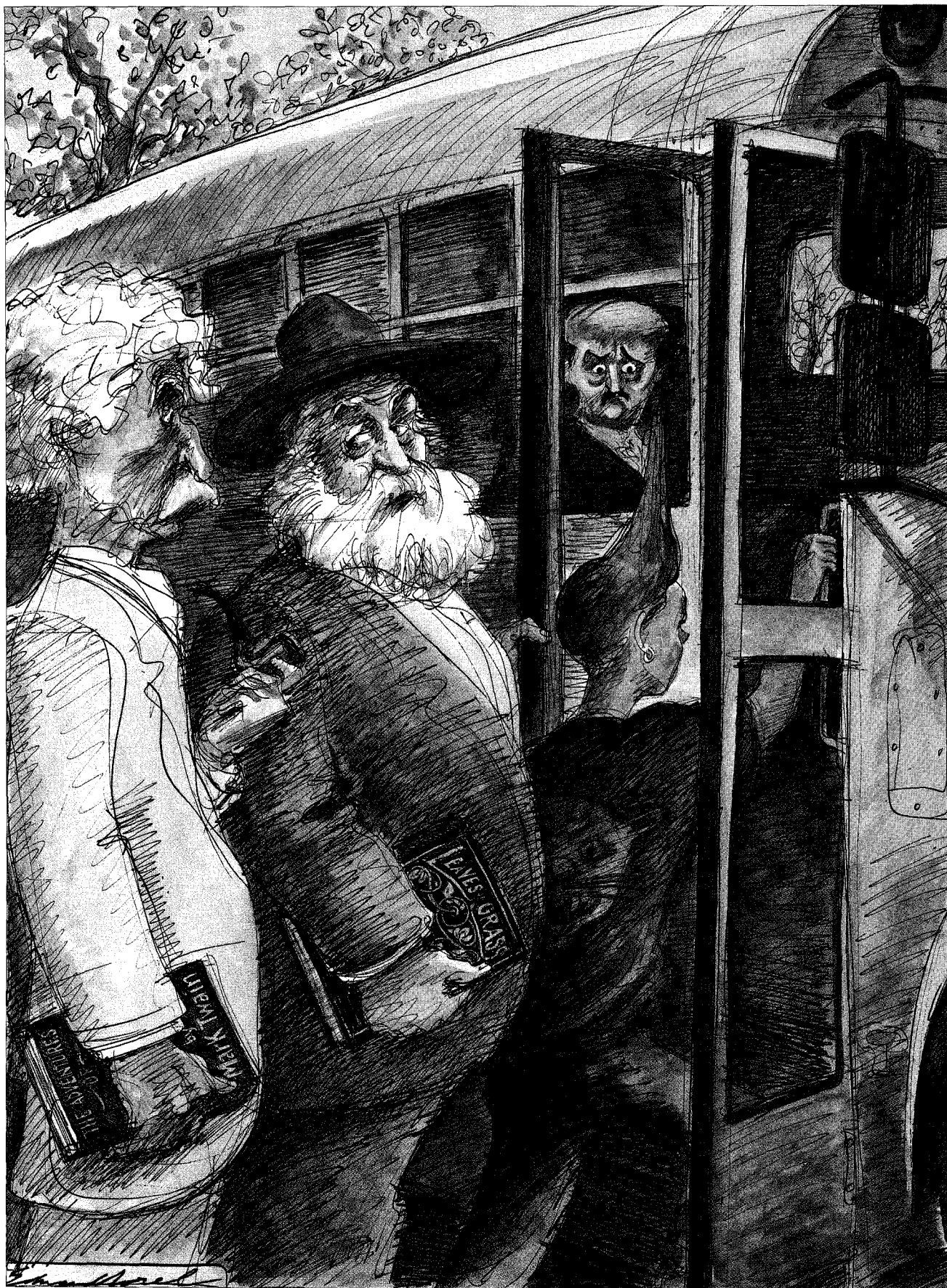
mainstream outlets like these, plus the three big networks. Whether or not real bias in news reporting has changed, the perception of the press's political role has become steadily more polarized. One great truth of political life is that each side is absolutely convinced that the other has an unfair advantage in getting its views out. Liberals point to talk radio, conservatives to the generally liberal outlook of Hollywood. Many people point to Murdoch as an example of unbalanced power—and Murdoch himself points to *The New York Times*. In a recent speech he said that the *Times* was by far "the most powerful force in the country." "Its news and its priorities," he continued, "are repeated in hundreds of newspapers ... There is very much a tendency there, if you like, to domination by one company."

Sooner or later Murdoch's outlets, especially Fox News, will be more straightforward about their political identity—and they are likely to bring the rest of the press with them. There will be liberal papers, radio shows, TV programs, and Web sites for liberals, and conservative ones for conservatives. This result will hardly be new. Frankly partisan media have never ceased to be the rule in modern Europe. Our journalistic culture may soon enough resemble that of early nineteenth-century America, in which party-owned newspapers presented selective versions of the truth. News addressed to a particular niche—not simply in its content but also in its politics—may be the natural match to an era with hundreds of satellite and cable channels and limitless numbers of Internet sites.

An age of more purely commercial, more openly partisan media leaves out some of the functions that news was until recently expected to perform: giving a broad public some common source of information for making political decisions, and telling people about trends and events they didn't already know they were interested in. One way or another, self-governing societies must figure out the suitable commercial channels through which the information necessary for democratic decisions can be spread.

That's not exactly Rupert Murdoch's problem, though he helped make it the world's. If the pure-market approach doesn't do the job of informing the country, then eventually another sort of market process might kick in. Citizens who think they've landed in a vast information wasteland could ask their representatives to set new rules for the media: rules that recognize an obligation of the media beyond maximum profit, rules clear enough to survive interpretation by regulators or appeals courts with clear ideological agendas. In the long run the press does give the public what it wants. We're about to see just what that is. ■

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic. His Atlantic cover story last November, "The Fifty-first State?" about postwar Iraq, won the 2003 National Magazine Award for Public Interest. His books include Free Flight: From Airline Hell to a New Age of Travel (2001), Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy (1996), and Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System (1994).

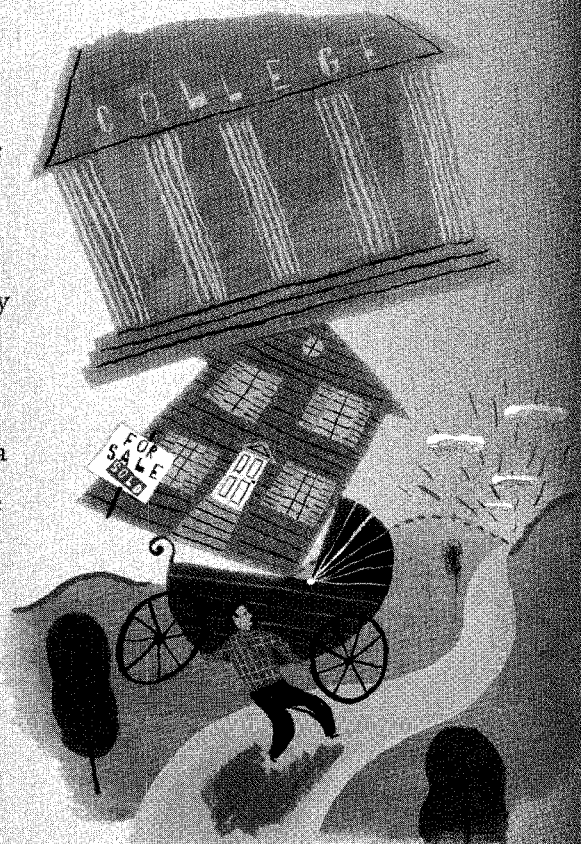


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FOUNDERS CHIC

Our reverence for the Fathers has gotten out of hand

BY H. W. BRANDS

Illustration by Istvan Banyai

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“The history of our Revolution will be one continued lie from one end to the other,” John Adams wrote to Benjamin Rush in 1790. “The essence of the whole will be that Dr. Franklin’s electrical rod smote the Earth and out sprung General Washington. That Franklin electrified him with his rod, and thence forward these two conducted all the policy, negotiations, legislatures and war.”

Adams never liked being wrong. Yet he, rather than George Washington or Benjamin Franklin, is the lion of recent historical literature. David McCullough’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *John Adams*, with more than 1.5 million hard-cover copies in print, has enthralled American readers and elevated Adams—in the popular mind, at least—to the very first rank of American heroes. Not that the other Founders are faring badly. Joseph J. Ellis won a Pulitzer for his best-selling *Founding Brothers* (2000), a group portrait of the Washington-Franklin-Adams generation, which followed his *American Sphinx* (1997), a National Book Award-winning study of Thomas Jefferson. *Founding Brothers* describes the Founders as “America’s first and, in many respects, its only natural aristocracy.” (Washington’s life is next in line for the Ellis treatment.) Richard Brookhiser has written recent appreciations of Washington, Adams, and Alexander Hamilton. Franklin, the oldest of the Founders, lives again in my book *The First American* (2000), which had the good fortune to make the best-seller lists. Edmund Morgan’s 2002 portrait of Franklin was also a hit; Walter Isaacson’s admiring *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* appeared this summer.

Why the sudden interest in the Founders? Or was it ever thus?

In fact it was *not* ever thus. Interest in the Founders has risen and fallen over time, as has admiration for them and their accomplishments. Although such things are hard to measure, it’s probably fair to say that their stock is currently at an all-time high. It’s also fair, and necessary, to say that this isn’t entirely a blessing for their country. In revering

the Founders we undervalue ourselves and sabotage our own efforts to make improvements—necessary improvements—in the republican experiment they began. Our love for the Founders leads us to abandon, and even to betray, the very principles they fought for.

The Founders were anything but demigods to themselves and their contemporaries, who recognized full well that the experiment in self-government had only begun. Washington came closest to apotheosis in his time, but even he rubbed many republicans the wrong way. His aloofness was legendary. At the Constitutional Convention of 1787 the convivial Gouverneur Morris boasted that he could soften up the austere general. Hamilton dared him to try, saying that if he would clap Washington on the shoulder and make companionable small talk, Hamilton would buy dinner for Morris and friends. Morris accepted the challenge, and greeted Washington like an old drinking partner. Washington instantly grew stiffer than usual; he icily removed Morris’s arm from his shoulder, stepped away in disgust, and drove Morris from the room with an ominous glower. “I have won the bet,” Morris said at the promised dinner, “but paid dearly for it, and nothing could induce me to repeat it.”

Washington’s haughtiness helped to win him the presidency: despite the Revolution, deference to rank wasn’t dead in America. But it was losing ground to egalitarianism. Philip Freneau, the editor of the *National Gazette*, regularly denounced Washington as a monarchist: “He holds levees like a King, receives congratulations on his birthday like a King, makes treaties like a King, answers petitions like a King, employs his old enemies like a King.” Benjamin Franklin Bache, Freneau’s comrade-in-opposition (and the grandson of Benjamin Franklin), compared Washington to Oliver Cromwell and Louis XVI. In the columns of the *Philadelphia Aurora*, Bache alleged “political iniquity” and “legalized corruption” in the Washington Administration,

and called the first President “the source of all the misfortunes of our country.” Thomas Paine, the leading propagandist of the Revolution, accused Washington of abandoning the cause for which the Revolution was fought (not to mention abandoning Paine in a French prison, where he languished during the French Revolution). In an open letter to Washington, addressing him in the third person, Paine wrote, “[Washington] has no friendships ... He is incapable of forming any. He can serve or desert a man, or a cause, with constitutional indifference; and it is this cold, hermaphrodite faculty that imposed itself upon the world and was credited for a while, by enemies as by friends, for prudence, moderation and impartiality.”

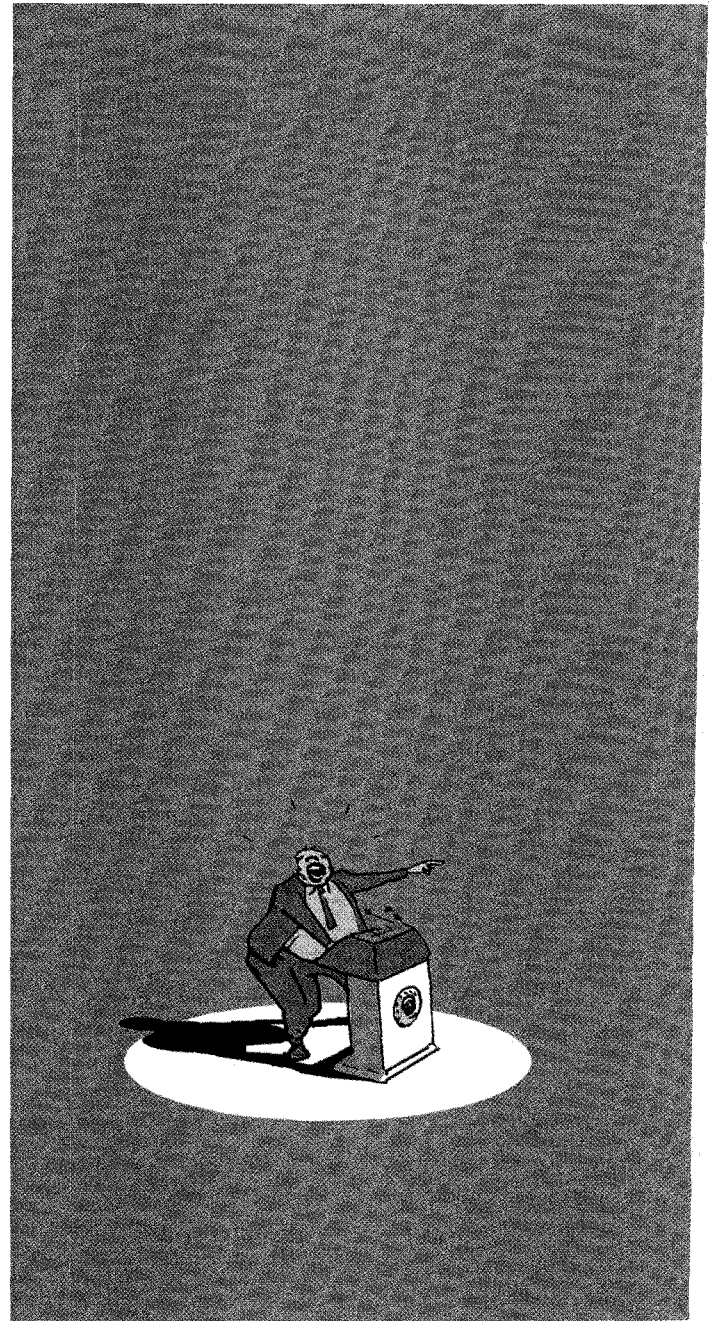
Washington believed that his sacrifices and service to the country had earned him better. His decision to step down after two terms owed much, as he put it to Hamilton, to his “disinclination to be longer buffeted in the public prints by a set of infamous scribblers.” When he handed the presidency to John Adams, he did so with palpable relief. “Me thought I heard him think,” Adams recalled, “‘Ay! I am fairly out and you are fairly in! See which of us will be the happiest!’”

Adams soon decided, being as sensitive to criticism as Washington and even more subject to it. Benjamin Bache tore into him as “the blasted tyrant of America” and “a ruffian deserving of the curses of mankind.” He taxed Adams for obesity, referring to him as “His Rotundity,” the possessor of a “sesquipedality of belly.”

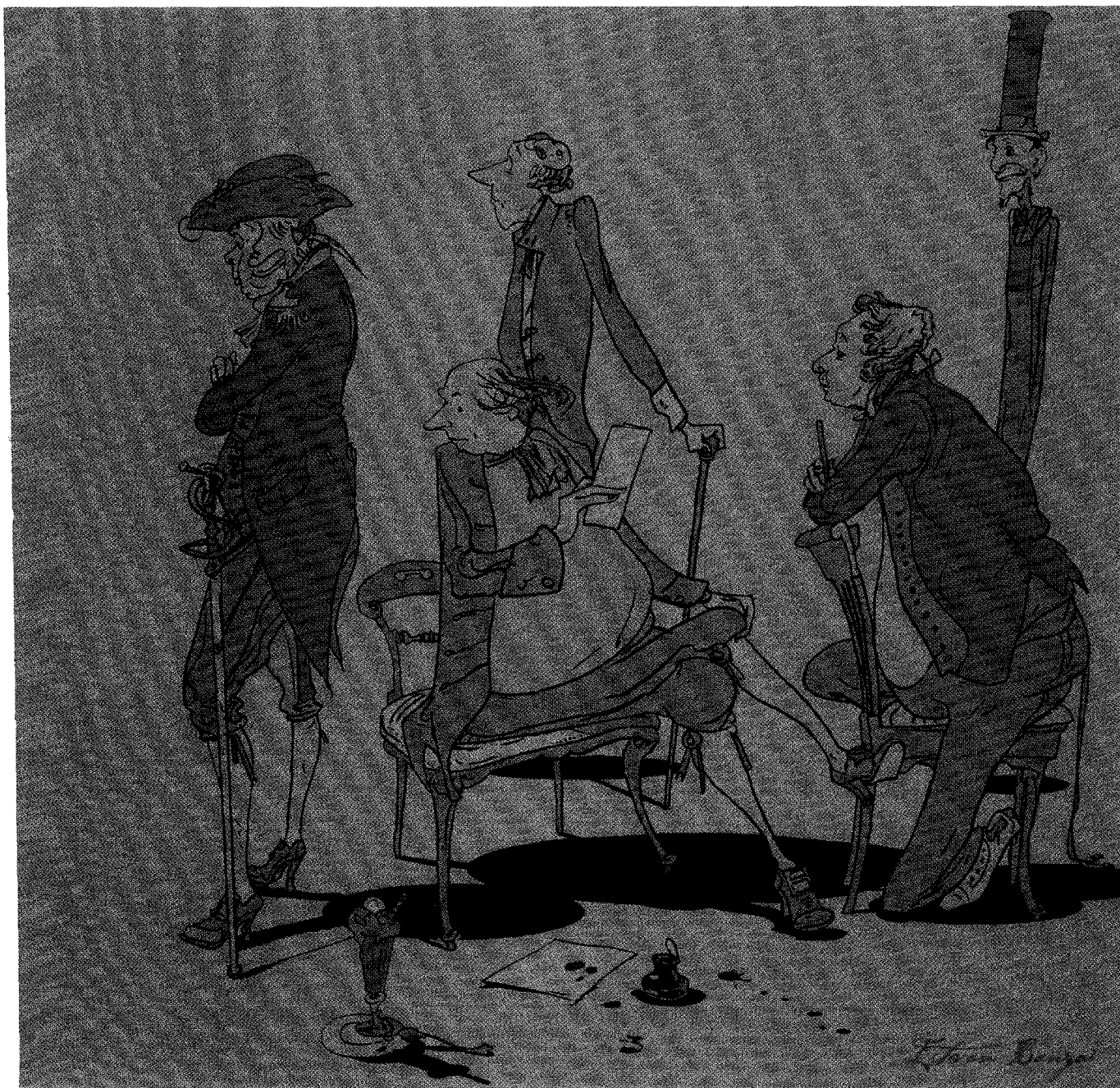
By Adams’s tenure, the hope for a politics above party—the initial dream of the Founders—had been dashed on the twin rocks of majority rule and the French Revolution. Majority rule required coalitions, the stabler the better; the French Revolution ideologically polarized these coalitions. Adams’s Federalists faced off against Jefferson’s Republicans and held on tightly to the levers of power. The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 attempted to outlaw criticism and to prevent the Republicans from recruiting new voters among recent immigrants. The measures provoked predictable outrage. A Republican patron of a tavern in Newark wobbled into the street in time to observe a sixteen-gun salute to President Adams and to wish aloud that one of the rounds should find Adams’s ample rear. His arrest prompted a New York paper to worry that “joking may be very dangerous even to a free country.”

Yet the Republicans were in certain respects the least of Adams’s worries. Adams fell out with Hamilton, whom he called “the bastard brat of a Scotch pedlar,” and Hamilton devoted a long pamphlet to cataloguing the President’s deficiencies. His defection delighted the Republicans. Describing the Hamilton pamphlet as a “thunderbolt,” James Madison told Jefferson, “I rejoice with you that Republicanism is likely to be so *completely* triumphant.” Indeed it was: the split among the Federalists opened the door to Jefferson and the Republicans in the election of 1800.

The Republican victory was even sweeter for the scur-



rilous things the Federalists had said during the campaign. Jefferson was called “a mean-spirited, low-lived fellow, the son of a half-breed Indian squaw, sired by a Virginia mulatto father.” His deism shocked pious Christians (though it wasn’t much different from that of Washington or Franklin or many other educated persons of his day), and his early enthusiasm for the French Revolution made him a Jacobin in Federalist eyes. Timothy Dwight, a Congregationalist minister and the president of Yale, foresaw a lurid future of freethinking: “The Bible cast into a bonfire ... our children ... chanting mockeries against God ... our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution ... our sons the disciples of Voltaire, and the dragoons of Marat.” A Connecticut paper warned of the orgies a Jefferson presidency would bring: “Murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest



will all be openly taught and practiced; the air will be rent with the cries of the distressed; the soil will be soaked with blood, and the nation black with crimes."

When Jefferson became President and the heavens didn't quite fall, his enemies found other means of attack, including the charge, originated by James Callender and avidly circulated by the Federalist press, that Jefferson had fathered several children by one of his slaves, Sally Hemings. The steamy tales took sundry forms, including verse: "Of all the damsels on the green / On mountain or in valley / A lass so luscious ne'er was seen / As Monticellan Sally." Historians and forensic geneticists would still be debating the accuracy of the paternity charge two centuries later. In Jefferson's day, as the Federalists' campaign of slander made plain, accuracy was beside the point.

THE FIRST FALL: SLAVERY

The second generation of American independence was somewhat more respectful of the Founders than their contemporaries had been. But it was no less critical. The republican experiment had survived, against the forecasts of many naysayers, and that warranted respect. But it might not survive much longer, because of some glaring deficiencies in the Founders' work—and that warranted criticism. By the 1820s two grave sins of omission hung ominously over the country: the Founders' failure to deal with slavery, and their failure to specify whether sovereignty lay with the states or with the nation.

The ambivalence toward the Founders became apparent in the celebrations surrounding the fiftieth anniversary of independence. In cities, towns, and villages across the

country Americans congratulated themselves on "Freedom's Jubilee." Toasts to "independence" and "the glorious Fourth" typically launched the rounds of patriotic drinking; references to the Founders collectively, and to General Washington himself, were often placed in the context of salutes to "the soldiers of the Revolution." Deference to the *demos*, the people, at the comparative expense of the elites reflected the most visible political trend during that period: the dramatic expansion of the electorate. By the late 1820s the states had eliminated most property qualifications for voting, and state legislatures, which previously had chosen most presidential electors, handed that task to ordinary voters. The common man came to the fore, and the old elites—including, after the fact, the Founders—lost ground commensurately. (Interest briefly revived when the country learned, to its astonishment, that Jefferson and Adams had both died on the very day of the Jubilee.)

Not just democracy ate into the historical reputation of the Founders. As more Americans gained political rights, those who lacked them became increasingly conspicuous. Abolitionism came of age as a political and social force.

TV

As if it were a tap I turn it on,
not hot or cold but tepid infotainment,
and out it gushes, sparkling evidence
of conflict, misery, concupiscence
let loose on little leashes, in remissions
of eager advertising that envisions
on our behalf the better life contingent
upon some buy, some needful acquisition.

A sleek car takes a curve in purring rain,
a bone-white beach plays host to lotioned skin,
a diaper soothes a graying beauty's frown,
an unguent eases sedentary pain,
false teeth are brightened, beer enhances fun,
and rinsed hair hurls its tint across the screen:
these spurts of light are drunk in by my brain,
which sickens quickly, till it thirst again.

—JOHN UPDIKE

John Updike is the author of more than fifty books. His most recent include Seek My Face (2002), a novel, and Americana and Other Poems (2001).

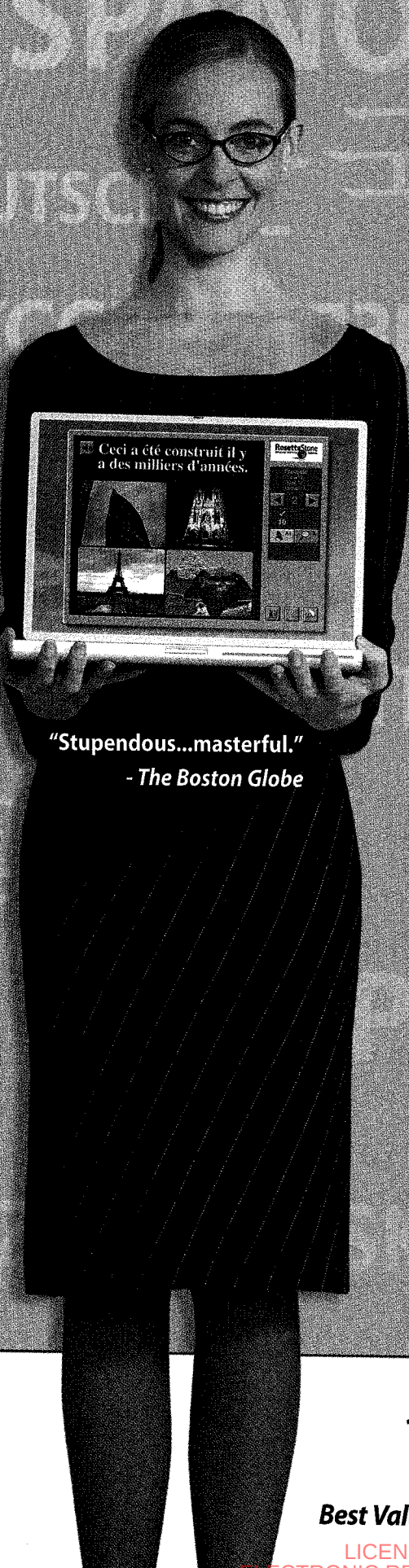
Many of the Jubilee speakers (in the North, at least) called for the current generation to fulfill what the Founders had only promised. In Braintree, Massachusetts, the birthplace of Adams, the Reverend Josiah Bent recalled the original meaning of a jubilee as an occasion for freeing slaves, and challenged his audience to live up to the biblical precedent. "Can America be glorious in freedom," he asked, "with such a number of human beings so degraded, so oppressed, so wronged, and so bleeding in her bosom?"

In contemplating this question, Americans of the second quarter of the nineteenth century were compelled to confront the deficiencies of the Founding. The landmark documents of the Revolutionary era—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—were scrutinized and found wanting. The abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison was so outraged at the Constitution and its framers for fastening slavery upon the American body politic that he damned the federal charter as "a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell," and publicly burned his copy. Politicians signaled their dissatisfaction with the Founders in other ways. Senator William Seward, of New York, described "a higher law than the Constitution" and said that this law—the natural law of human liberty—dictated the demise of slavery.

Abraham Lincoln chose his words more carefully, which was one reason he, rather than Seward, eventually became President. Lincoln didn't go over the heads of the Founders, but he did regret that they hadn't done more to restrict slavery. He credited them with good intentions. "Our revolutionary fathers," he said, had understood that slavery was unjust; they simply hadn't known how to eliminate it without jeopardizing their experiment in unifying the thirteen states. Even so, by refusing to mention slavery by name in the Constitution, they had preserved the possibility of future change—"just as an afflicted man hides away a wen or a cancer, which he dares not cut out at once, lest he bleed to death; with the promise, nevertheless, that the cutting may begin at the end of a given time."

Arguments over what Congress *could* do naturally hinged on the Constitution and its construction; arguments over what Congress *should* do involved the Declaration of Independence. Both sides in the slavery debate drew support from Jefferson's manifesto—but for different reasons. What, precisely, did he mean when he said that "all men are created equal"? Which men? What kind of equality? To the dismay of the anti-slavery forces, the Supreme Court proclaimed in the 1857 Dred Scott case that blacks could not be citizens. Lincoln lambasted Chief Justice Roger Taney, asserting that the slaveholding class had seized the government, so that the Declaration was "assailed, and sneered at, and construed, and hawked at, and torn, till, if its framers could rise from their graves, they could not at all recognize it."

Whatever the truth of Lincoln's statement, he would have been the first to admit that had Jefferson been more explicit



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in embracing blacks in his universe of equality, or had the Continental Congress been less vigorous in excising the parts of Jefferson's draft that dealt harshly with slavery, the abolitionists' cause would have been strengthened. The excisions lent weight to both sides of the argument, with slavery's foes extrapolating from them to interpret Jefferson's "all men" as "all men," and slavery's defenders citing them as evidence that the Continental Congress meant "all white men."

In any event, the unfinished work of the Founders burdened their successors with determining whether slavery could exist within a republican (now democratic) framework of government, and whether the states or the nation held the dominant political authority. It isn't hard to understand why Americans weren't overly impressed with the Founding generation as that debate turned bloody in the 1850s in Kansas and within a few years provoked secession and civil war.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE FOUNDERS MYTH

Six hundred thousand lives later, the Founders' work was finally completed. Slavery was abolished, and the nation stood supreme. The cost was staggering—a cost that by any reasonable reckoning should be charged, at least partially, to the Founders' account. Yet the very cost of the Civil War contributed to the emergence of a myth of the Founders—a myth that has persisted, with occasional challenge, until today.

The myth served an obvious political purpose in the wake of the Civil War. Reconstruction ended about the time of the American centennial, which occasioned a backward glance to an era when the country was united and Americans directed their anger and fire at foreigners. (This nostalgia glossed over the fact that the bitterest fighting in the Revolution had been between Americans. But this had always been glossed over, and generally still is.) The end of Reconstruction marked the return to power of the southern white aristocracy, which sought to reaffirm its attachment to the nation lest the North be tempted to reoccupy the South. That so many of the Founders were of the southern planter class made it easy and politically convenient for southerners to embrace them. For the North, the end of Reconstruction signaled an exhaustion of the reforming spirit and, with the Industrial Revolution in full tilt, a return to the business of business. ("What is the chief end of man?" Mark Twain inquired. "To get rich. In what way? Dishonestly if we can, honestly if we must.") The discovery of common ground with the South, in the form of a shared reverence for the Founders, helped to soothe those northern consciences bothered by the egregious inequalities that still pervaded southern life. It also, by a kind of tacit pact, discouraged the South from raising questions about increasing inequality in the industrializing North.

James Schouler, whose seven-volume *History of the United*

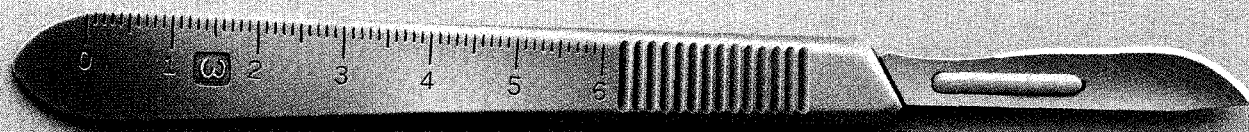
States of America Under the Constitution commenced publication in 1880, admired nearly everything about the Founders. Hamilton and Madison, the moving spirits behind the Constitutional Convention, were his favorites; George Washington was a paragon, naturally, being "not unconscious of his surpassing influence" but becomingly modest withal. Franklin was "the sage of commonsense." John Bach McMaster, in his similarly monumental history of the United States, shared Schouler's conviction that the Founders were of keen mind and elevated character. "Franklin," he wrote, "was in truth the greatest American then living; nor would it be safe to say that our country has since his day seen his like."

Henry Cabot Lodge joined the encomiastic chorus. A Harvard professor before entering politics, Lodge wrote biographies of Alexander Hamilton and George Washington, among many other books. Lodge's Hamilton was the essence of patriotic virtue. "He was a great orator and lawyer, and he was also the ablest political and constitutional writer of his day, a good soldier, and possessed of a wonderful capacity for organization and practical administration. He was a master in every field that he entered." Lodge said he had tried to find fault in Washington but had failed, because no fault existed. Put simply, Washington embodied "the noblest possibilities of humanity."

Every generation of historians is compelled to revise the wisdom of its immediate predecessors, even if that means reaffirming the wisdom of an earlier generation. The Progressive era produced its own revisionist imperative, in the form of investigative—"muckraking"—journalism that laid bare the sordid means by which the great fortunes of Rockefeller, Carnegie, Morgan, and other capitalist titans were amassed.

Charles Beard, a professor at Columbia University, brought both generational and Progressive revisionism to bear on the Founders in *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, a 1913 study that argued that the Constitutional Convention was guided less by patriotic genius than by material self-interest. Much the same could be said, Beard wrote, of the groups that backed, and won, ratification of the Constitution by the states. Many of the creditors of the government had bought up bonds from the original buyers for dimes on the dollar and now wished to ensure that the bonds were honored in full. Shippers, merchants, and manufacturers wanted to override the state governments, which got in the way of business. The result was a charter founded on class interests. Beard couldn't deny the abilities of the Founders, but he judged that their gifts were closer to those of Rockefeller and Morgan than of Solon and Socrates.

It was Beard's misfortune that his book appeared just months before World War I began and a few years before the outbreak of the Russian Revolution. As America approached



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¹ Potsky AL, Legler J, Albertsen PC, Stanford JL, Gilliland FD, Hamilton AS, et al "Health Outcomes After Radical Prostatectomy or Radiotherapy for Clinically Localized Prostate Cancer: Results from the Prostate Cancer Outcomes Study (PCOS)." J Natl Cancer Inst 2000; 92:1582-1592.

² The most commonly reported side effects of prostate brachytherapy are short-term urinary or obstructive symptoms within the first few weeks after the implant procedure.

and then entered the war, anything critical of the Founders smacked of disloyalty or even Bolshevik treason. Beard's writings upset his employers at Columbia, whose board of trustees managed to rid the university of this dangerous radical. His fellow historians were hardly more supportive.

For the generation that lasted from World War I to the early Cold War, the reputation of the Founders stood firm. Carl Van Doren won a Pulitzer Prize in 1939 for a biography of Benjamin Franklin that began by describing its subject as "unsurpassed by any man in the range of his natural gifts and of the important uses he put them to." In the 1940s and 1950s Douglas Southall Freeman, the editor of the *Richmond News Leader*, produced a seven-volume paean to Washington, Virginia's most illustrious son, which celebrated the whole generation of the Founders. Dumas Malone launched a similarly glowing and almost equally lengthy life of Jefferson, in which he remarked of his subject (in words that might have applied to the Founders as a group), "His fame is probably greater in our generation than it has been at any other time since his death." The title of Catherine Drinker Bowen's *Miracle at Philadelphia* (1966), on the Constitutional Convention, captured the mood.

The Founders took their hits during the later 1960s and the 1970s, along with everything else associated with the establishment. The mere idea of slave owners declaiming about liberty seemed the height of hypocrisy to a generation crusading for civil rights and taught to detect phoniness at five hundred paces. Vietnam and Watergate spawned suspicion of anything associated with government, recent or ancient. Neo-Beardians reopened the investigation into the convenient coincidence between the professed ideals of the Founders and their pocketbooks.

Yet the sharpest insult was not criticism but neglect. Academic historians shunned dead white males for sexier subjects, and although the old icons never entirely lost their appeal, many readers were enticed away by tales of less familiar, less privileged persons. Women, members of minority groups, and ordinary people displaced the Founders, until it seemed that Abigail Adams ("Remember the ladies ...") was more familiar to schoolchildren than her husband, and George Washington Carver more familiar than George Washington.

MISPLACED, AND MISBEGOTTEN, REVERENCE

And now they are back. The Founders' revival is in part a reflection of the anti-liberal reaction that began with Ronald Reagan and continues today. Combined with this, no doubt, is a certain roots-seeking among readers, which increased as the new millennium approached and hasn't let up in the troubling time since. Beyond the zeitgeist, the current revival reflects an appreciation of some brilliant writing. McCullough and Ellis are two of the finest nonfiction stylists now writing, and would attract readers

whatever their subject. (McCullough won his spurs, and much of his following, by recounting natural disasters and the construction of public works.)

Shouldn't we applaud the Founders' restored popularity? Isn't patriotism a good thing, especially amid our current difficulties? Yes—but like anything else, it can be taken too far. And when it causes us to overvalue those who have preceded us, it does harm. Here a personal note may be in order. Since my book on Franklin was published, in the autumn of 2000, I have given numerous talks around the country on Franklin and his times. Listeners are appreciative, and they ask various questions after I finish. But one question, worded one way or another, comes up at almost every session: How was it that America was so blessed with intellect and virtue at the moment of its founding? And, by implication, Why is it that the current generation falls so short?

I don't dismiss the premise. But I do point out that the Founders' work was very much unfinished at the time the torch was passed to the next generation, and that tidying up the loose ends took eighty years and one of the most destructive wars in the history of the world before 1914. Whether I change many minds about the Founders is hard to say. Most people still seem to think that God or fate or something smiled on America in the 1770s and 1780s, and hasn't smiled that way since.

Americans aren't alone in looking to a golden age, but in our case this inhibits action on important public issues. We marvel that our predecessors, living at a time when the free population of the country didn't exceed the population of greater Chicago today, could have gained independence from Britain and fashioned a republic that has lasted more than two centuries; and we bewail our inability, in a population eighty times as large, to find anyone like them. Leaving aside the statistical improbability of this supposed lack (which only confirms true believers in their conviction of America's miraculous birth), the history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries doesn't bear out the golden-age idea.

The Founders got the country off to a good start, but they would have been the first to admit that it was no more than a start. They were acutely aware of the continuing nature of their experiment in self-government, and they expected future generations to accomplish as much as they had. They would have dismissed as ludicrous the notion that theirs was a blessed generation, to which others might never compare. That notion is essentially anti-republican, too, and therefore insults all they struggled to achieve.

In making giants of the Founders, we make pygmies of ourselves; in making saints of them, we make sinners of ourselves. Sinners we may be, but no more so than they (where is our Benedict Arnold? our Aaron Burr?). And although humility is a virtue, when consciousness of our sins becomes an inferiority complex that causes large numbers of the present generation to turn away from politics as incomparably inept or corrupt, it does the Founders no honor.

"Nepotism has never looked so good."*

"Nepotism is widely condemned yet even more widely practiced. Adam Bellow shows why this is so, and he makes a fascinating and well-researched argument that this is not necessarily a bad thing." —WALTER ISAACSON, author of *Kissinger: A Life*, former chairman of CNN, and managing editor of *Time*

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"Adam Bellow explains why we are so addicted to what we deplore, and does so in plain English with convincing scholarship."

—ROBIN FOX, professor of anthropology, Rutgers University, and author of *Kinship and Marriage* and *Encounter with Anthropology**

"Bellow's analysis of nepotism's forms is utterly enthralling and stimulating." —*Publishers Weekly*

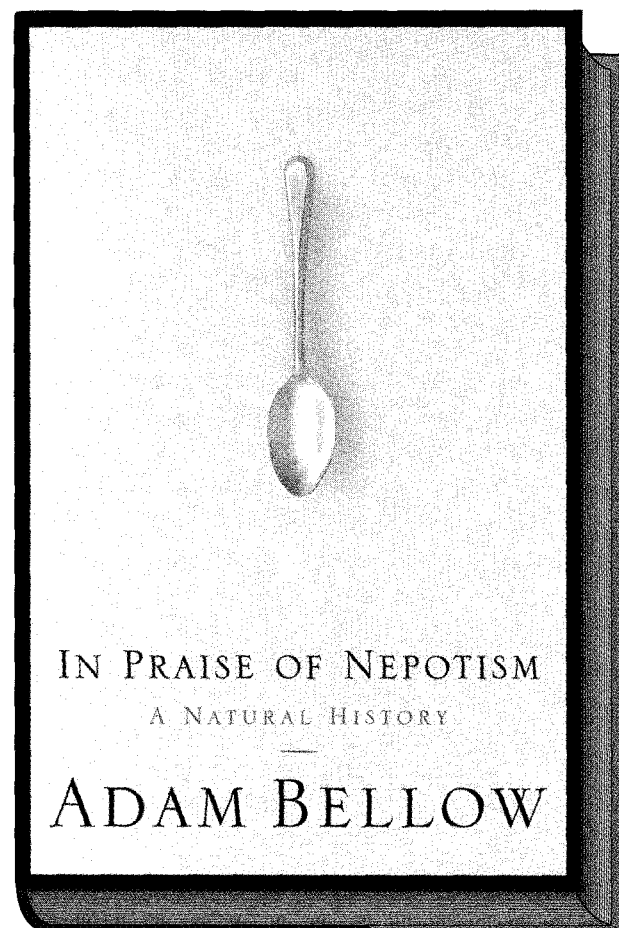


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The point of their revolution was to craft a government based on the will of the people; they would have judged themselves failures if they thought their mechanism required saints to run it.

Another question I hear frequently is, What would Franklin think if he were restored to the world of the living? I answer that he would be tickled by the technological advances since the eighteenth century. I also say that he would be gratified by the durability of the republic that he and his fellows established, and by some of the recent accomplishments of their successors. As an early abolitionist, Franklin would be delighted at the civil-rights reforms of the 1960s, which transformed race relations in this country almost as thoroughly as did the Civil War and Reconstruction, and far more positively than anything the Founders managed. As a lifelong opponent of authoritarianism, he would be thrilled at twentieth-century America's defeat of fascism and communism. British imperialism was oppressive, but George III was neither as dangerous nor anywhere near as evil as Hitler and Stalin.

But Franklin would be dismayed by the popular denigration of politics, and exceedingly impatient with us for acting helpless in the face of problems that the Founders would have tackled at once. To take one example, arguments over the Second Amendment, with its almost certainly inadvertent ambiguity about the relation of militia service to gun ownership, would largely cease if we simply rewrote it. Gun advocates already treat the militia clause as a nullity; let them erase the clause—or try to. Gun opponents want the clause to govern gun ownership; let them rewrite the amendment—or try to. But almost no one suggests such an obvious solution to the problem. Instead we treat the Constitution as holy writ, to be parsed and glossed but not otherwise tampered with. We agonize over “original intent” as if what the Founders believed ought to determine the way we live two centuries later. They would have laughed, and then wept, at our timidity.

The same applies to any number of other issues. It is fair to say that nearly all the Founders would have been shocked at the overwhelming role of money in modern American politics. (Franklin thought the President, for example, ought to serve without pay.) When they decried “corruption” in British politics, and cited it as a prime reason for their revolt against King George, they were talking about the very thing—the golden triangle of wealth, access, and office—that campaign-finance reformers decry today. But until now every effort to diminish the role of money in politics has been stymied by the First Amendment, which has been interpreted by the courts as equating political advertising with political speech. Many other countries simply limit how much money may be spent on campaigns. There is no reason we can't too—if we simply recognize that we may have to rewrite the First Amendment. This rewriting would be far closer to the true spirit of the Founders than

some misplaced reverence for their handiwork. Of course, an amendment-blocking coalition, either in Congress or in the states, could ensure that the First Amendment was left as is. But at least we would have had an open debate.

Or consider the Electoral College. It is surrounded by the same mystique that befogs other aspects of the Constitution. For decades it was easy to consider the Electoral College a harmless vestige—or to predict that should it ever again confer victory on a popular loser, as it had in 1876 and in 1888, there would be such an outcry that it would be abolished. But in the aftermath of the presidential election of 2000 the outcry quickly faded into silence. Nearly everyone agrees that the Electoral College is undemocratic, and that if modern Americans wrote the Constitution, it wouldn't be included. But we can't get ourselves to do anything about it. Ironically, the system we are so reluctant to touch works not at all the way the Founders intended (they anticipated autonomy among the individual electors—which would, in fact, have been even less democratic). The Founders, far from being pleased at our respect for their work (which in this case doesn't even reflect their intent), would have been appalled at our paralysis.

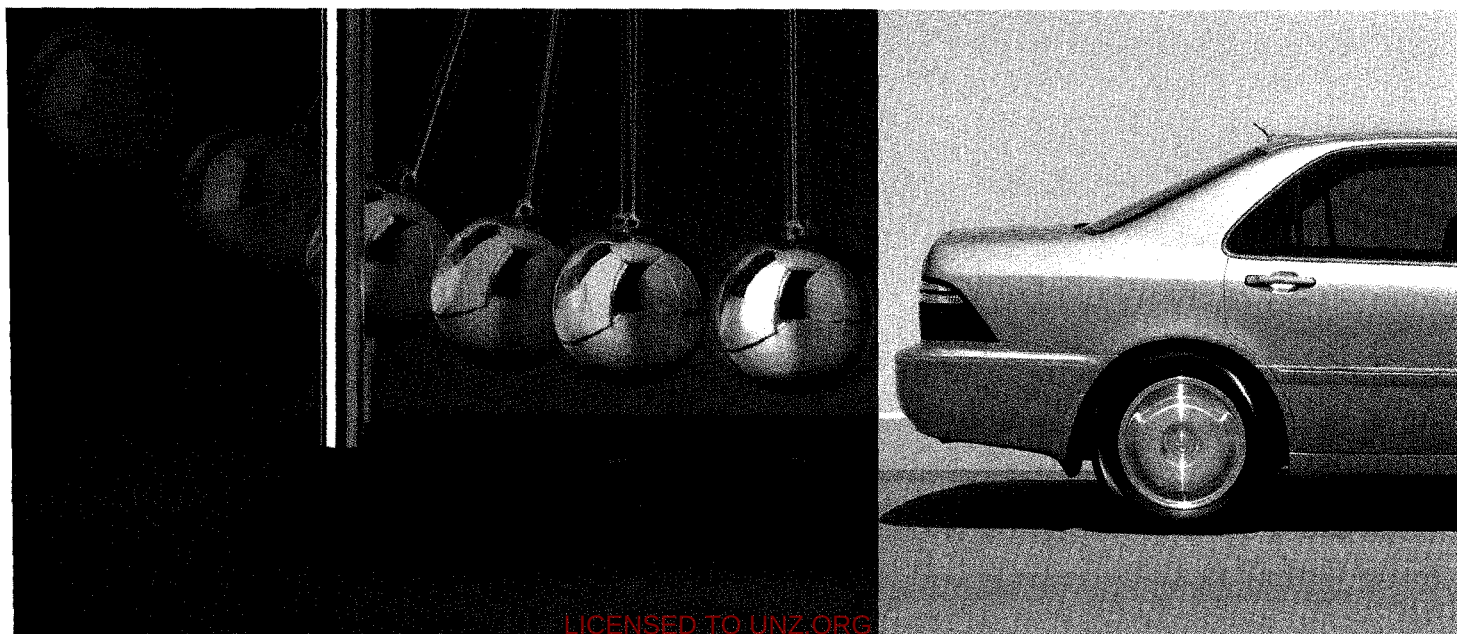
Some will argue that the Constitution ought not to be tinkered with. This bears consideration to the extent that the argument is an honest one and not simply an apology for the status quo. One of the beauties of the federal Constitution, in contrast to many state constitutions, is that it deals in broad and enduring principles—principles that have allowed it to last. But an uncritical embrace of constitutional beauty can degenerate into the same form of ancestor worship that shapes much of our thinking about the Founders. *They* certainly weren't beguiled by the past; though they spoke of their ancient rights as *Englishmen*, they knew full well that they were leaping into an uncharted future. And the last thing they intended their revolution to produce was a new orthodoxy.

The one trait the Founders shared to the greatest degree is the one most worth striving after today—but also one that is often forgotten in the praise of their asserted genius. These men were no smarter than the best their country can offer now; they weren't wiser or more altruistic. They may have been more learned in a classical sense, but they knew much less about the natural world, including the natural basis of human behavior. They were, however, far bolder than we are. When they signed the Declaration of Independence, they put their necks in a noose; when they wrote the Constitution, they embarked on an audacious and unprecedented challenge to custom and authority. For their courage they certainly deserve our admiration. But even more they deserve our emulation. ■

H. W. Brands is the author of The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin (2000) and The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream (2002). He teaches history at Texas A&M University.



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E.T. AND GOD

*Could earthly religions survive the discovery
of life elsewhere in the universe?*

BY PAUL DAVIES

Illustration by Marc Burckhardt

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The recent discovery of abundant water on Mars, albeit in the form of permafrost, has raised hopes for finding traces of life there. The Red Planet has long been a favorite location for those speculating about extraterrestrial life, especially since the 1890s, when H. G. Wells wrote *The War of the Worlds* and the American astronomer Percival Lowell claimed that he could see artificial canals etched into the planet's parched surface. Today, of course, scientists expect to find no more than simple bacteria dwelling deep underground, if even that. Still, the discovery of just a single bacterium somewhere beyond Earth would force us to revise our understanding of who we are and where we fit into the cosmic scheme of things, throwing us into a deep spiritual identity crisis that would be every bit as dramatic as the one Copernicus brought about in the early 1500s, when he asserted that Earth was not at the center of the universe.

Whether or not we are alone is one of the great existential questions that confront us today. Probably because of the high emotional stakes, the search for life beyond Earth is deeply fascinating to the public. Opinion polls and Web-site hits indicate strong support for and interest in space missions that are linked even obliquely to this search. Perceiving the public's interest, NASA has reconfigured its research strategy and founded the NASA Astrobiology Institute, dedicated to the study of life in the cosmos. At the top of the agenda, naturally, is the race to find life elsewhere in the solar system.

Researchers have long focused on Mars in their search for extraterrestrial life because of its relative proximity. But twenty-five years ago, as a result of the 1976 *Viking* mission, many of them became discouraged. A pair of spacecraft had passed through the planet's extremely thin atmosphere, touched down on the surface, and found it to be a freeze-dried desert drenched with deadly ultraviolet rays. The spacecraft, equipped with robotic arms, scooped up Martian dirt so that it could be examined for signs of biological activity. The results of the analysis were inconclusive but generally negative, and hopes faded for finding even simple microbes on the surface of Mars.

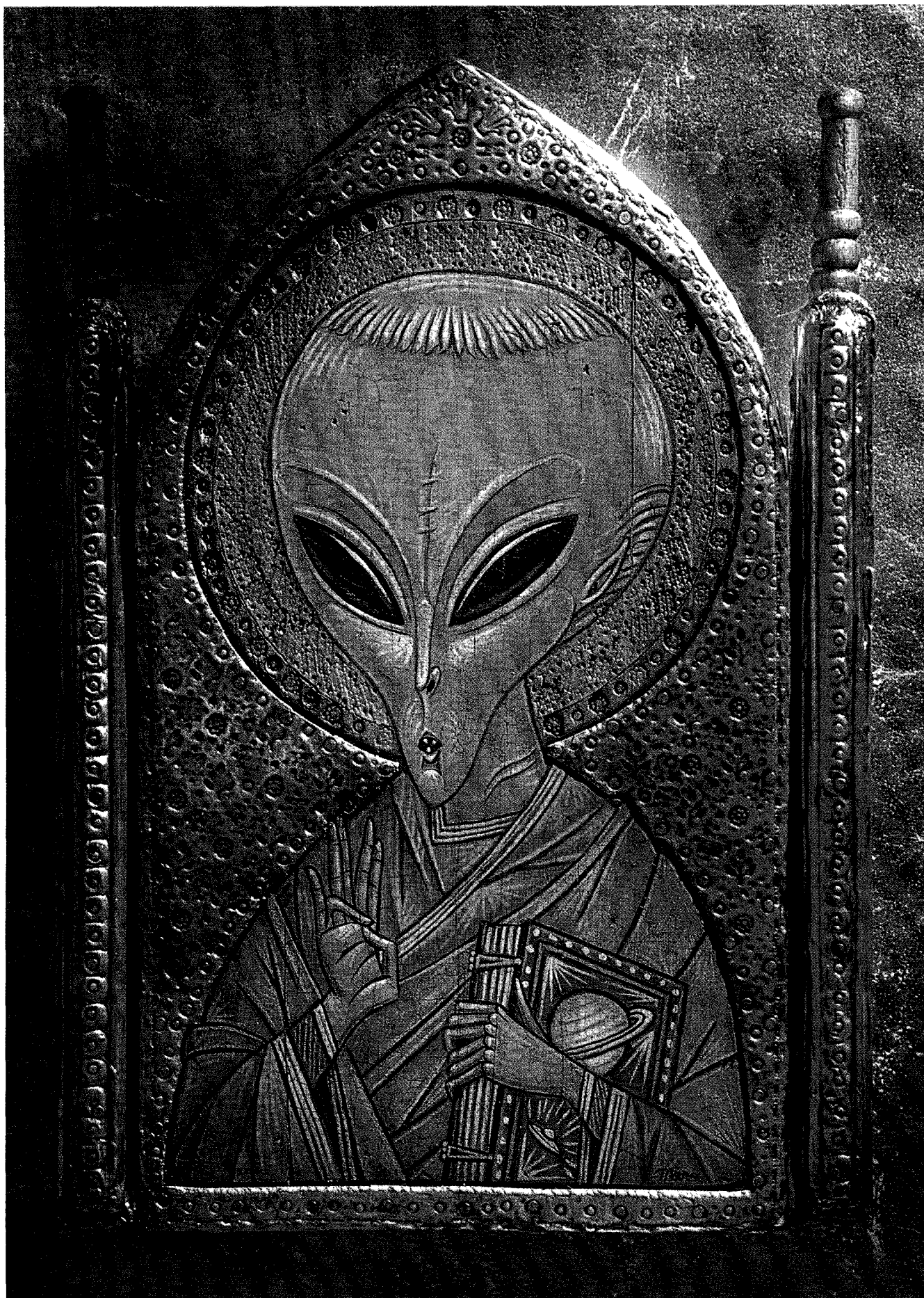
The outlook today is more optimistic. Several probes

are scheduled to visit Mars in the coming months, and all will be searching for signs of life. This renewed interest is due in part to the discovery of organisms living in some remarkably hostile environments on Earth (which opens up the possibility of life on Mars in places the *Viking* probes didn't examine), and in part to better information about the planet's ancient history. Scientists now believe that Mars once had a much thicker atmosphere, higher temperatures, rivers, floods, and extensive volcanic activity—all conditions considered favorable to the emergence of life.

The prospects for finding living organisms on Mars remain slim, of course, but even traces of past life would represent a discovery of unprecedented scientific value. Before any sweeping philosophical or theological conclusions could be drawn, however, it would be necessary to determine whether this life was the product of a second genesis—that is, whether its origin was independent of life on Earth. Earth and Mars are known to trade material in the form of rocks blasted from the planets' surfaces by the violent impacts of asteroids and comets. Microbes could have hitched a ride on this detritus, raising the possibility that life started on Earth and was transferred to Mars, or vice versa. If traces of past life were discovered on Mars but found to be identical to some form of terrestrial life, transportation by ejected rocks would be the most plausible explanation, and we would still lack evidence that life had started from scratch in two separate locations.

The significance of this point is crucial. In his theory of evolution Charles Darwin provided a persuasive account of how life evolved over billions of years, but he pointedly omitted any explanation of how life got started in the first place. "One might as well think of origin of matter," he wrote in a letter to a friend. A century and a half later, scientists still have little understanding of how the first living thing came to be.

Some scientists believe that life on Earth is a freak accident of chemistry, and as such must be unique. Because even the simplest known microbe is breathtakingly complex,



they argue, the chances that one formed by blind molecular shuffling are infinitesimal; the probability that the process would occur twice, in separate locations, is virtually negligible. The French biochemist and Nobel laureate Jacques Monod was a firm believer in this view. "Man at last knows he is alone in the unfeeling immensity of the universe, out of which he has emerged only by chance," he wrote in 1971. He used this bleak assessment as a springboard to argue for atheism and the absurdity and pointlessness of existence. As Monod saw it, we are merely chemical extras in a majestic but impersonal cosmic drama—an irrelevant, unintended sideshow.

But suppose that's not what happened. Many scientists believe that life is not a freakish phenomenon (the odds of life's starting by chance, the British cosmologist Fred Hoyle once suggested, are comparable to the odds of a whirlwind's blowing through a junkyard and assembling a functioning Boeing 747) but instead is written into the laws of nature. "The universe must in some sense have known we were coming," the physicist Freeman Dyson famously observed. No one can say precisely in what sense the universe might be pregnant with life, or how the general expectancy Dyson spoke of might translate into specific physical processes at the molecular level. Perhaps matter and energy always get fast-tracked along the road to life by what's often called "self-organization." Or perhaps the power of Darwinian evolution is somehow harnessed at a pre-biotic molecular stage. Or maybe some efficient and as yet unidentified physical process (quantum mechanics?) sets the gears in motion, with organic life as we know it taking over the essential machinery at a later stage. Under any of these scenarios life becomes a fundamental rather than an incidental product of nature. In 1994, reflecting on this same point, another Nobel laureate, the Belgian biochemist Christian de Duve, wrote, "I view this universe not as a 'cosmic joke,' but as a meaningful entity—made in such a way as to generate life and mind, bound to give birth to thinking beings able to discern truth, apprehend beauty, feel love, yearn after goodness, define evil, experience mystery."

Absent from these accounts is any mention of miracles. Ascribing the origin of life to a divine miracle not only is anathema to scientists but also is theologically suspect. The term "God of the gaps" was coined to deride the notion that God can be invoked as an explanation whenever scientists have gaps in their understanding. The trouble with invoking God in this way is that as science advances, the gaps close, and God gets progressively squeezed out of the story of nature. Theologians long ago accepted that they would forever be fighting a rearguard battle if they tried to challenge science on its own ground. Using the formation of life to prove the existence of God is a tactic that risks instant demotion should someone succeed in making life in a test tube. And the idea that God acts in fits and starts, moving atoms around on odd occasions in competition with natural forces, is a decidedly uninspiring image of the Grand Architect.

The theological battle line in relation to the formation of life is not, therefore, between the natural and the miraculous but between sheer chance and lawlike certitude. Atheists tend to take the first side, and theists line up behind the second; but these divisions are general and by no means absolute. It's perfectly possible to be an atheist and believe that life is built ingeniously into the nature of the universe. It's also possible to be a theist and suppose that God engineered just one planet with life, with or without the help of miracles.

Though the discovery of microbes on Mars or elsewhere would ignite a passionate theological debate, the truly difficult issues surround the prospect of advanced alien beings in possession of intelligence and technology. Most scientists don't think that such beings exist, but for forty years a dedicated band of astronomers has been sweeping the skies with radio telescopes in hopes of finding a message from a civilization elsewhere in the galaxy. Their project is known as SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence).

Because our solar system is relatively young compared with the universe overall, any alien civilization the SETI researchers might discover is likely to be much older, and presumably wiser, than ours. Indeed, it might have achieved our level of science and technology millions or even billions of years ago. Just contemplating the possibility of such advanced extraterrestrials appears to raise additional uncomfortable questions for religion.

The world's main faiths were all founded in the pre-scientific era, when Earth was widely believed to be at the center of the universe and humankind at the pinnacle of creation. As scientific discoveries have piled up over the past 500 years, our status has been incrementally diminished. First Earth was shown to be just one planet of several orbiting the Sun. Then the solar system itself was relegated to the outer suburbs of the galaxy, and the Sun classified as an insignificant dwarf star among billions. The theory of evolution proposed that human beings occupied just a small branch on a complex evolutionary tree. This pattern continued into the twentieth century, when the supremacy of our much vaunted intelligence came under threat. Computers began to outsmart us. Now genetic engineering has raised the specter of designer babies with superintellecets that leave ours far behind. And we must consider the uncomfortable possibility that in astrobiological terms, God's children may be galactic also-rans.

Theologians are used to putting a brave face on such developments. Over the centuries the Christian church, for example, has time and again been forced to accommodate new scientific facts that challenge existing doctrine. But these accommodations have usually been made reluctantly and very belatedly. Only recently, for example, did the Pope acknowledge that Darwinian evolution is more than just a

theory. If SETI succeeds, theologians will not have the luxury of decades of careful deliberation to assess the significance of the discovery. The impact will be instant.

The discovery of alien superbeings might not be so corrosive to religion if human beings could still claim special spiritual status. After all, religion is concerned primarily with people's relationship to God, rather than with their biological or intellectual qualities. It is possible to imagine alien beings who are smarter and wiser than we are but who are spiritually inferior, or just plain evil. However, it is more likely that any civilization that had surpassed us scientifically would have improved on our level of moral development, too. One may even speculate that an advanced alien society would sooner or later find some way to genetically eliminate evil behavior, resulting in a race of saintly beings.

Suppose, then, that E.T. is far ahead of us not only scientifically and technologically but spiritually, too. Where does that leave mankind's presumed special relationship with God? This conundrum poses a particular difficulty for Christians, because of the unique nature of the Incarnation. Of all the world's major religions, Christianity is the most species-specific. Jesus Christ was *humanity's* savior and redeemer. He did not die for the dolphins or the gorillas, and certainly not for the proverbial little green men. But what of deeply spiritual

that is supposed to be God's singular gift. "God chose a very specific way to redeem human beings," writes George Coyne, a Jesuit priest and the director of the Vatican Observatory, whose own research includes astrobiology. "He sent his only son, Jesus, to them, and Jesus gave up his life so that human beings would be saved from their sin. Did God do this for extraterrestrials? ... The theological implications about God are getting ever more serious."

Paul Tillich, one of the few prominent Protestant theologians to give serious consideration to the issue of alien beings, took a more positive view. "Man cannot claim to occupy the only possible place for incarnation," he wrote. The Lutheran theologian Ted Peters, of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, in Berkeley, California, has made a special study of the impact on religious faith of belief in extraterrestrials. In discussing the tradition of debate on this topic, he writes, "Christian theologians have routinely found ways to address the issue of Jesus Christ as God incarnate and to conceive of God's creative power and saving power exerted in other worlds." Peters believes that Christianity is robust enough and flexible enough to accommodate the discovery of extraterrestrial intelligence, or ETI. One theologian who is emphatically not afraid of that challenge is Robert Russell, also of the Center for

The discovery of just a single bacterium somewhere beyond Earth would force us to rethink how we fit into the cosmic scheme of things, throwing us into a spiritual identity crisis as dramatic as the one brought about by Copernicus.

aliens? Are they not to be saved? Can we contemplate a universe that contains perhaps a trillion worlds of saintly beings, but in which the only beings eligible for salvation inhabit a planet where murder, rape, and other evils remain rife?

Those few Christian theologians who have addressed this thorny issue divide into two camps. Some posit multiple incarnations and even multiple crucifixions—God taking on little green flesh to save little green men, as a prominent Anglican minister once told me. But most are appalled by this idea or find it ludicrous. After all, in the Christian view of the world, Jesus was God's *only* son. Would God have the same person born, killed, and resurrected in endless succession on planet after planet? This scenario was lampooned as long ago as 1794, by Thomas Paine. "The Son of God," he wrote in *The Age of Reason*, "and sometimes God himself, would have nothing else to do than to travel from world to world, in an endless succession of death, with scarcely a momentary interval of life." Paine went on to argue that Christianity was simply incompatible with the existence of extraterrestrial beings, writing, "He who thinks he believes in both has thought but little of either."

Catholics tend to regard the idea of multiple incarnations as verging on heresy, not because of its somewhat comic aspect but because it would seem to automate an act

Theology and the Natural Sciences. "As we await 'first contact,'" he has written, "pursuing these kinds of questions and reflections will be immensely valuable."

Clearly, there is considerable diversity—one might even say muddle—on this topic in theological circles. Ernan McMullin, a professor emeritus of philosophy at Notre Dame University, affirms that the central difficulty stems from Christianity's roots in a pre-scientific cosmology. "It was easier to accept the idea of God's becoming man," he has written, "when humans and their abode both held a unique place in the universe." He acknowledges that Christians especially face a stark predicament in relation to ETI, but feels that Thomas Paine and his like-minded successors have presented the problem too simplistically. Pointing out that concepts such as original sin, incarnation, and salvation are open to a variety of interpretations, McMullin concludes that there is also widespread divergence among Christians on the correct response to the ETI challenge. On the matter of multiple incarnations he writes, "Their answers could range ... from 'yes, certainly' to 'certainly not.' My own preference would be a cautious 'maybe.'"

Even for those Christians who dismiss the idea of multiple incarnations there is an interesting fallback position: perhaps the course of evolution has an element of direc-

tionality, with humanlike beings the inevitable end product. Even if *Homo sapiens* as such may not be the unique focus of God's attention, the broader class of all humanlike beings in the universe might be. This is the basic idea espoused by the philosopher Michael Ruse, an ardent Darwinian and an agnostic sympathetic to Christianity. He sees the incremental progress of natural evolution as God's chosen mode of creation, and the history of life as a ladder that leads inexorably from microbes to man.

Most biologists regard a "progressive evolution," with human beings its implied preordained goal, as preposterous. Stephen Jay Gould once described the very notion as "noxious." After all, the essence of Darwinism is that nature is blind. It cannot look ahead. Random chance is the driving force of evolution, and randomness by definition has no directionality. Gould insisted that if the evolutionary tape were replayed, the result would be very different from what we now observe. Probably life would never get beyond microbes next time around.

But some respected biologists disagree sharply with Gould on this point. Christian de Duve does not deny that the fine details of evolutionary history depend on happenstance, but he believes that the broad thrust of evolutionary change is somehow innately predetermined—that plants and animals were almost destined to emerge amid a general advance in complexity. Another Darwinian biologist, Simon Conway Morris, of Cambridge University, makes his own case for a "ladder of progress," invoking the phenomenon

of convergent evolution—the tendency of similar-looking organisms to evolve independently in similar ecological niches. For example, the Tasmanian tiger (now extinct) played the role of the big cat in Australia even though, as a marsupial, it was genetically far removed from placental mammals. Like Ruse, Conway Morris maintains that the "humanlike niche" is likely to be filled on other planets that have advanced life. He even goes so far as to argue that extraterrestrials would have a humanoid form. It is not a great leap from this conclusion to the belief that extraterrestrials would sin, have consciences, struggle with ethical questions, and fear death.

The theological difficulties posed by the possibility of advanced alien beings are less acute for Judaism and Islam. Muslims, at least, are prepared for ETI: the Koran states explicitly, "And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the living creatures that He has scattered through them." Nevertheless, both religions stress the specialness of human beings—and, indeed, of specific, well-defined groups who have been received into the faith. Could an alien become a Jew or a Muslim? Does the concept even make sense? Among the major religious communities, Buddhists and Hindus would seem to be the least threatened by the prospect of advanced aliens, owing to their pluralistic concept of God and their traditionally much grander vision of the cosmos.

Among the world's minority religions, some would positively welcome the discovery of intelligent aliens. The Raëlians, a Canada-based cult recently propelled to fame by its claim to have cloned a human being, believe that the cult's leader, Raël, a French former journalist originally named Claude Vorilhon, received revelations from aliens who briefly transported him inside a flying saucer in 1973. Other fringe religious organizations with an extraterrestrial message include the ill-fated Heaven's Gate cult and many UFO groups. Their adherents share a belief that aliens are located further up not only the evolutionary ladder but also the spiritual ladder, and can therefore help us draw closer to God and salvation. It is easy to dismiss such beliefs as insignificant to serious theological debate, but if evidence for alien beings were suddenly to appear, these cults might achieve overnight prominence while established religions floundered in doctrinal bewilderment.

Ironically, SETI is often accused of being a quasi-religious quest. But Jill Tarter, the director of the SETI Institute's Center for SETI Research, in Mountain View, California, has no truck with religion and is contemptuous of the theological gymnastics with which religious scholars accommodate the possibility of extraterrestrials. "God is our own invention," she has written. "If we're going to survive or turn into a long-lived technological civilization, organized religion needs to be outgrown. If we get a message [from an alien civilization] and it's secular in nature, I think that says that they have no organized religion—that they've outgrown it."

SILENT HEART ATTACK

When silence is another kind of violence.
Like all the breath you've ever breathed
suddenly swallowed. But since it happened
over days, each night a little worse,
it lacked the drama of my father's death.
He went down, like a building, on his knees.
I sat in the dark inside the feeling
I was turning into stone, or, if I turned
around, to salt, salt-crystals diamonding
the blackouts. Silence is what you hear,
the mouth a moon of Os, black filling up
the body with its blood. I listened.
Each night, all night, my father louder.

—STANLEY PLUMLY

Stanley Plumly is a Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland. A collection of his critical essays, Argument and Song, will be published this month.

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MEN'S STYLE

Tarter's dismissal is rather naive, however. Though many religious movements have come and gone throughout history, some sort of spirituality seems to be part of human nature. Even atheistic scientists profess to experience what Albert Einstein called a "cosmic religious feeling" when contemplating the awesome majesty of the universe.

Would advanced alien beings share this spiritual dimension, even though they might long ago have "outgrown" established religion? Steven Dick, a science historian at the U.S. Naval Observatory, believes they would. Dick is an expert on the history of speculation about extraterrestrial life, and he suggests that mankind's spirituality would be greatly expanded and enriched by contact with an alien civilization. However, he envisages that our present concept of God would probably require a wholesale transformation. Dick has outlined what he calls a new "cosmotheology," in which human spirituality is placed in a full cosmological and astrobiological context. "As we learn more about our place in the universe," he has written, "and as we physically move away from our home planet, our cosmic consciousness will only increase." Dick proposes abandoning the transcendent God of monotheistic religion in favor of what he calls a "natural God"—a superbeing located within the universe and within nature. "With due respect for present religious

articulated by William Paley in the eighteenth century, was that living organisms' intricate adaptation to their environments pointed to the providential hand of a benign Creator. Darwin demolished the argument by showing how evolution driven by random mutation and natural selection could mimic design. Now a revamped design argument has emerged that fully embraces the Darwinian account of evolution and focuses instead on the origin of life. (I must stress that I am not referring here to what has recently become known as the Intelligent Design movement, which relies on an element of the miraculous.) If life is found to be widespread in the universe, the new design argument goes, then it must emerge rather easily from nonliving chemical mixtures, and thus the laws of nature must be cunningly contrived to unleash this remarkable and very special state of matter, which itself is a conduit to an even more remarkable and special state: mind. This sort of exquisite bio-friendliness would represent an extraordinary and unexpected bonus among nature's inventory of principles—one that could be interpreted by those of a religious persuasion as evidence of God's ingenuity and foresight. In this version of cosmic design, God acts not by direct intervention but by creating appropriate natural laws that guarantee the emergence of life and mind in cosmic abundance. The

What about mankind's presumed special relationship with God? This is a conundrum for Christians. Jesus was *humanity's* savior and redeemer. He did not die for the dolphins or the gorillas, and certainly not for the proverbial little green men.

traditions whose history stretches back nearly four millennia," he suggests, "the natural God of cosmic evolution and the biological universe, not the supernatural God of the ancient Near East, may be the God of the next millennium."

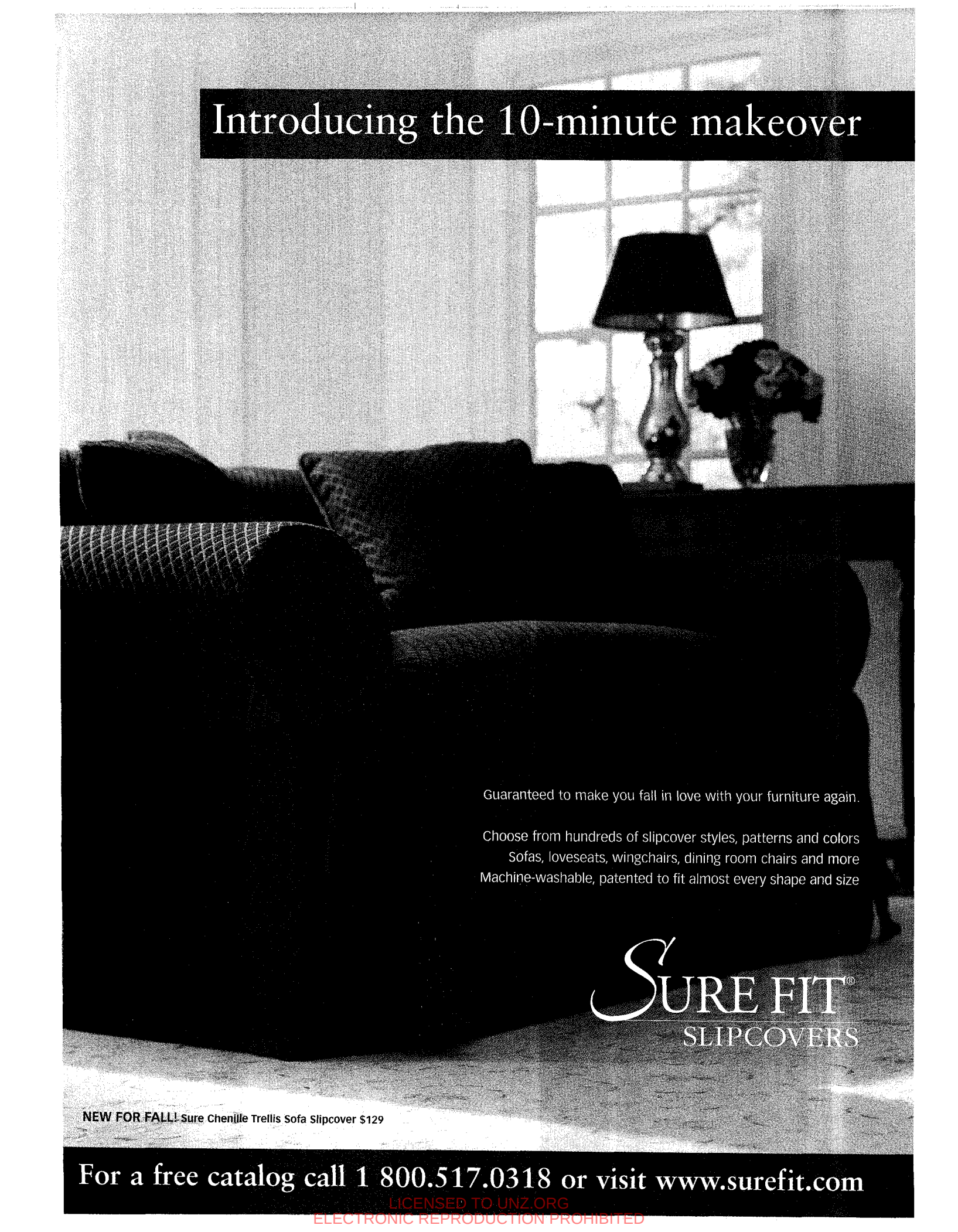
Some form of natural God was also proposed by Fred Hoyle, in a provocative book titled *The Intelligent Universe*. Hoyle drew on his work in astronomy and quantum physics to sketch the notion of a "superintellect"—a being who had, as Hoyle liked to say, "monkeyed with physics," adjusting the properties of the various fundamental particles and forces of nature so that carbon-based organisms could thrive and spread across the galaxy. Hoyle even suggested that this cosmic engineer might communicate with us by manipulating quantum processes in the brain. Most scientists shrug off Hoyle's speculations, but his ideas do show how far beyond traditional religious doctrine some people feel they need to go when they contemplate the possibility of advanced life forms beyond Earth.

Though in some ways the prospect of discovering extraterrestrial life undermines established religions, it is not all bad news for them. Astrobiology has also led to a surprising resurgence of the so-called "design argument" for the existence of God. The original design argument, as

universe, in other words, is one in which there are no miracles except the miracle of nature itself.

The E.T. debate has only just begun, but a useful starting point is simply to acknowledge that the discovery of extraterrestrial life would not have to be theologically devastating. The revamped design argument offers a vision of nature distinctly inspiring to the spiritually inclined—certainly more so than that of a cosmos sterile everywhere but on a single planet. History is instructive in this regard. Four hundred years ago Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake by the Church in Rome for, among other things, espousing the notion of a plurality of inhabited worlds. To those whose theological outlook depended on a conception of Earth and its life forms as a singular miracle, the very notion of extraterrestrial life proved deeply threatening. But today the possibility of extraterrestrial life is anything but spiritually threatening. The more one accepts the formation of life as a natural process (that is, the more deeply embedded one believes it is in the overall cosmic scheme), the more ingenious and contrived (dare one say "designed"?) the universe appears to be. ▀

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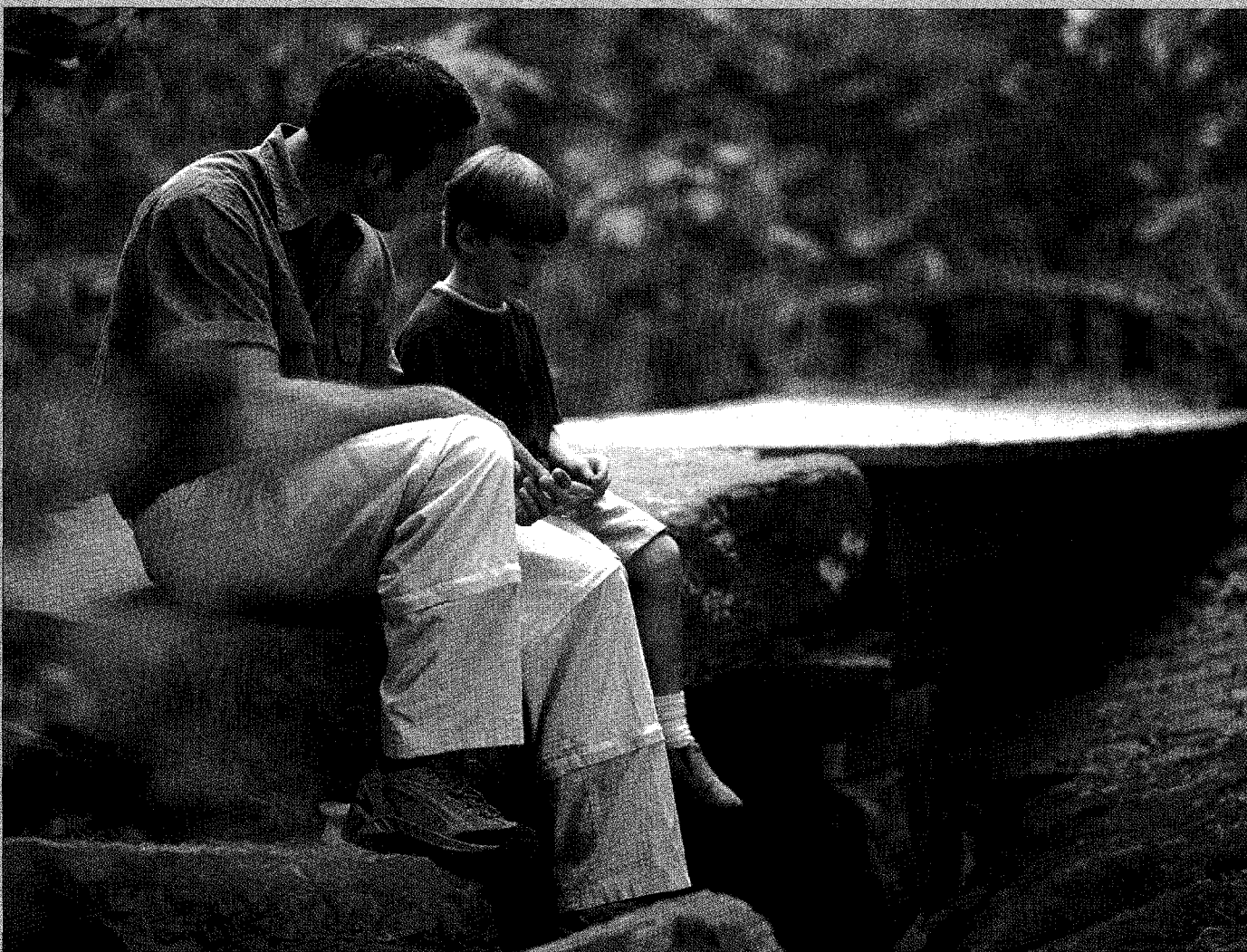
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MUDLAVIA

A short story

BY ELIZABETH STUCKEY-FRENCH

.....

The summer of 1916 would later be known as the last summer of peace. Within a year the United States would be at war, but that summer we still believed that President Wilson could keep us out of it. As a nation, we were told, we were getting bigger, better, and more stylish. Our population had risen to 100 million. Prohibition laws had been passed in twenty-four states. Every household would soon own an automobile. Ostriches, grackles, blackbirds, orioles, egrets, herons, and doves were slaughtered by the thousands so that their feathers could adorn women's hats. Americans were full of all kinds of foolish hope, and my mother and I were no exception.

On the morning of July 20 Mother and I were riding in a small wooden bus over the rutted back roads of Indiana, heading for magical Mudlavia. Every time the bus jounced, I felt a sharp pain in my knee, a pain that shot through the dull ache that had been my constant companion for three months. I was sweating in my wool knickers and jacket, which my mother had insisted I wear. Whenever she saw pain on my face, she drew me against her. I was too hot to be so close to my mother, smelling her too-strong lavender scent, but I was also afraid, and I felt lucky to have her with me. Six other passengers were on our bus, all adults, all traveling alone. One had a cane, three others hobbled on crutches. A fat man had been carried onto the bus by four farmers in Attica. An elderly woman lay flat on a stretcher at the rear of the bus. She kept making little whimpering sounds that drove me mad.

I closed my eyes to the dust, the cripples, my mother's round face, her dimpled chin, her lips pursed with concern, her eyes searching for every nuance of my feelings, and imagined myself, older and more handsome, soaring over a six-foot crossbar as a stadium crowd roared. I was only ten years old, but I was already determined to become an Olympic track star, setting world records in the high jump and the long jump. That summer, because of my knee, I'd had to give up daily jumping practice in my back yard. I was looking forward to our stay at Mudlavia, because without jumping, my life had become a bore. My father was often away on business. I was tired of playing silly games with the Dotties, tired of going calling with Mother on Wednesday

afternoons. I was also tired of the ache in my knee, but, I must admit, that was the least of it.

Why hadn't I told my parents as soon as my knee began to hurt? Had I sensed how serious it was? Perhaps I feared being totally smothered by my mother's love and concern—which felt stifling under ordinary circumstances. I'll never know why I didn't tell them, but I still take a peculiar pride in the fact that I managed to hide the pain for so long.

The night they found me out, we were putting on one of our plays—my best friends Dottie B. and Dottie G. and I. Each week Dottie B., who wanted to be a writer, wrote a new play. Every one featured the same two characters—a stupid married couple called Susanette and Losenette Floosenette, who were always having “misunderstandings” with friends, family, and everyone they met.

We put on the plays at my house, because my parents had the biggest house on Ninth Street. That night thirty or so neighbor children and parents were sitting on the new rose-colored carpet in our parlor. My mother's precious Globe Wernicke bookcase and her fumed-oak chairs and couch, with their elaborate carvings and spindles, had been pushed back against the wall. The new carpet was displayed to its best advantage.

I was playing Losenette, in my father's suit coat and bowler hat, and Dottie G., in her sister's red nightgown, was my wife, Susanette. We were visiting the Eiffel Tower on a trip we'd won through a soap-flakes sweepstakes. Dottie B. was the gendarme, telling us we couldn't take our dog, Monique, up to the top with us. I was in love with Dottie B. then, and still am to this day.

“But you don't understand,” I said, glaring at the gendarme and tweaking my imaginary moustache. “She's a *French* poodle.” I put all my weight on my left leg, accommodating the ache in my right one.

“*Oui oui, miss-ouer*,” Susanette said, patting her hair. She clutched my squirming cat, Flip Flop, who was playing Monique. Susanette went on, “We promised her she could see her native Paris from the Eiffel Tower.”

A ripple of laughter emerged from the audience. As always, I listened for my mother's laugh, and I heard it.

The gendarme drew herself up. Her reddish-gold hair

was tucked up under one of my newsboy hats, and she wore a pair of my knickers. So beautiful, Dottie B. "Sorry, *mes amis*," she said in a deep voice. "But what if she should do her business up there?"

This was the riskiest line in the play. Somebody tittered.

"We've come prepared," I said, whipping one of my father's handkerchiefs from my pocket.

"*Oui*," my wife said. "We'll take it back to Indiana as a souvenir. They'll display it in the courthouse, and people will line up to see it. Because it's French business, you see."

More laughter—a few nervous chuckles from the adults, snickers from the children. I glanced at my mother, who was shrinking back against the wall. My father got up and left the room. To my surprise, instead of feeling afraid, I felt frustrated and angry. The whole purpose of the plays, I realize now, was to insult an audience that didn't even have the sense to be insulted. The Dotties and I were imitating everything we hated about our stuffy parents, but most people thought we were poking fun at someone else, and some, like my father, took offense at a small impropriety and missed the point. I knew I was in for a spanking, so I decided to step off the plank and say something truly awful. Before I could speak, Flip Flop, for no apparent reason, went berserk. He began to twist and claw at Dottie G., who shrieked and held him out to me. I lunged for him, coming down hard on my right leg, which hurt so much that I collapsed in a ball on the floor. My mother rushed to my side. No spanking after all.

Our family doctor diagnosed my problem as rheumatism and suggested a visit to Mudlavia, which he described as a health spa known for its curative mud baths and mineral waters. It was only forty miles southwest of Lafayette, near the state line. Dr. Heath explained that a Warren County farmer, a Civil War veteran, had been digging a ditch near the spot where they later built the spa, and the mud had cured his rheumatism. People from all over went there to take the cure. Medical doctors were on the premises. It was just the ticket, Dr. Heath said.

"Sounds shady to me," my father said at dinner, the night Mother and I told him about Mudlavia. He helped himself to roast beef, clicked on his stopwatch, and began to eat. That summer he was practicing Frederick Taylor's regime of time management. At first he'd tried to impose it on Mother and me, but we'd rebelled by doing everything as slowly as we could, so he gave up and was now bent on improving only himself. He was thirty years old but looked twenty, so he'd taken to wearing rimless spectacles of plain glass and had grown a sleek blond moustache. I suppose he wanted to look more like a school superintendent and less like the man he'd been before he met my mother, a young rake who'd had a tempestuous, short-lived marriage to a woman named Toots Goodall. I'd stumbled on this information one day when I was poking through a box he kept hidden in the back of his closet. I'd found photos of him and

Toots. In one of them he was perched on a large, gaudily painted quarter moon, Toots sitting in his lap. When I asked her about Toots, Mother told me about his failed marriage, and made me promise not to mention it to anyone, including him. I thought then that she didn't want to remind him of his earlier, wilder life, fearing that he might decide to go back to it, but she must have known that part of him already had.

While Father fiercely chewed his roast beef, he stared at Mother and me with accusing eyes, as if *we* were hiding something from *him*, and I guess we were—we were hiding the intensity of our desire to go, to get away. "How do we know the place is safe?" he asked Mother.

"It's out in the middle of nowhere," Mother said. "It must be safe. Dr. Heath wouldn't have recommended it."

"I suppose you're right," Father said, clicking his stopwatch. "Two minutes, thirteen seconds. A new record."

Small-town doctors were gods, and to ignore Dr. Heath's advice would be a social snub. Mother had said the right thing.

Mudlavia was tucked back in the woods, up against a hillside. As our bus rounded the last bend, we passengers strained to get a good look at the place that would cure us. The sprawling building was four stories high, green with white trim, and had a wide wrap-around porch. In front was a manicured garden, bordered by hedges, with a bubbling limestone fountain in the center. Despite the heat everything looked fresh, even the pink hollyhocks lining the dusty road.

The bus pulled into a dirt lot beside the hotel, and the engine rattled and died. A feeling of peace, along with the dust, settled over me. It was the quietest place I'd ever been. Ninth Street was one of the busiest streets in Lafayette, and all day long we heard the roar of motorcars and the clatter of trolleys struggling up the hill. At Mudlavia, I heard individual sounds—a crow calling in a tree behind me, the atonal tinkling of wind chimes. A side door of the hotel flew open and a group of men, dressed in white, marched toward the bus. A few of them were pushing wheelchairs.

Mother touched my shoulder. "One of those chairs is for you," she said.

"Why? I don't need it." My crutches were beside me, leaning against the seat.

"The doctor here recommends it. It will put less strain on your knee." She bent over and whispered in my ear. "For you, it's only temporary." Her windblown hair, pulled loose from her egret-feather hat, tickled my cheek.

"Your hair's a mess," I said, sounding like my father.

Flinching, she turned away.

"Welcome to Mudlavia." A deep, southern-sounding voice filled the bus. The speaker was one of the men in white—a tall, strong-looking man with a squarish head.

"We're here to make your stay with us as comfortable as possible." He spoke as if reading from a prepared speech, and his eyes were trained on a spot at the back of the bus. "Do not hesitate to ask if you are in need of anything, ladies and gentlemen." His eyes shifted to me. "And young fella." He smiled, two front teeth popping over his lip. Every head turned toward me. My mother had tears in her eyes. I bowed my head, embarrassed and pleased to be the center of attention.

At dinner Mother and I sat at a table for four in the dining room, I in my wheelchair, she in a ladder-back chair. There were white tablecloths and huge chandeliers. We picked at our helpings of glazed ham, mashed potatoes, and steamed vegetables from "Mudlavia's Healthful Garden." In the corner of the large dining room a piano player in a tuxedo played popular tunes that we could barely hear over the rattling of dishes and the diners' chatter, some of which, especially from the table next to ours, was raucous.

At that table sat a thin, almost emaciated man with dark, sleek hair who perched on a red rubber cushion. On his right sat a voluptuous young woman with an elaborate, piled-up hairdo. She wore a low-cut, short-sleeved dress made of shiny silver material. On his left sat a woman who had dark hair cut in the new bobbed style, and wore an equally revealing black dress. A huge green parrot sat on her shoulder. The two women nestled in close to the man with the cushion, and all three were laughing loudly, as was everyone else at their table. Everything about these people was overdone, from the timbre of their voices to the sparkle of their jewelry. I'd never seen a parrot outside a cage before. And except for the man with the cushion, none of them appeared the least bit sick.

I couldn't look Mother in the eye. Somehow I felt embarrassed, as if I were responsible for these "unsuitables," as my father would have called them. I wanted to protect her from them, or felt that I should. And more of these big-city types were scattered throughout the dining room. Only a few people, most of them passengers on our bus, had the same scrubbed demeanor we did. We were outnumbered.

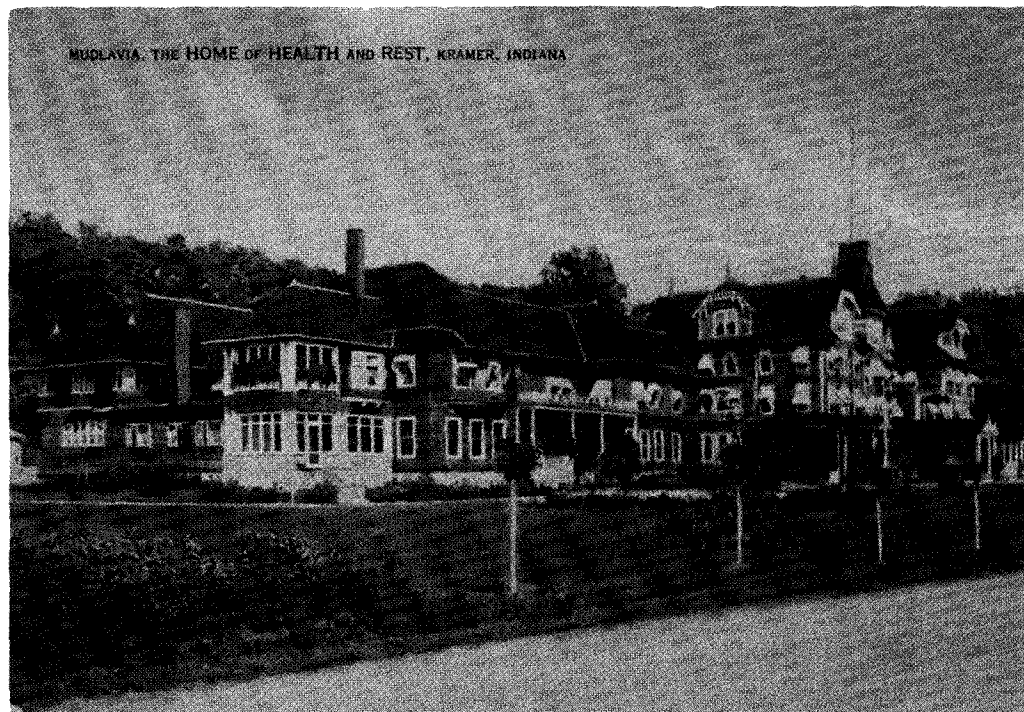
Had Dr. Heath ever been here? I wondered, not able to take my eyes off the threesome at the next table.

"One would think," Mother said, frowning at me, "with all the sick people ..." She didn't finish her sentence, but I knew she meant that our neighbors ought to be more con-

siderate. "I think this place is more of a resort than a health spa." She took another bite of glazed ham, chewing slowly.

"We could leave," I said, knowing I should offer the option. "We could call Father, and he'd come get us." I drained my glass of milk in one swallow, the way I was forbidden to do at home.

Mother didn't notice. She was staring at the man with the cushion. "No," she said. "We'll be here only three weeks."



"Paul Dresser wrote 'On the Banks of the Wabash' at Mudlavia," I reminded her. This was something else Dr. Heath had told us.

"You say the most intelligent things," Mother smiled, giving us permission to enjoy our dinner.

"Good evening." The cushion man stood beside our table. The woman in the silver dress waited there with him, hugging his cushion to her large bosom.

Mother set her fork beside her plate. "Good evening," she said to the man, but she looked at me.

"Your first night here?" His voice was surprisingly soft.

"Of course it is," the woman in the silver dress said. She also had a big nose. "Isn't this the first time we've seen them?"

The man ignored her. "I'm Harry Jones," he said. "This is Sylvia Smith." He kept smiling at Mother in a way that made me afraid he was going to cause trouble, like the villain, Flip, in the comic strip *Little Nemo in Slumberland*.

Mother said, "Nice to meet you," but didn't tell him our names.

"Come on." Miss Smith gave Mr. Jones a little shove with the cushion. "Let these people eat in peace."

"Enjoy the pecan pie," he said, still smiling at Mother in that peculiar way. "We'll get acquainted later."

Mother nodded. Miss Smith gave Harry another gentle shove, and the two of them left the dining room.

Mother said, "Mr. Jones' and Miss Smith.' Do we look that stupid?"

I wasn't quite sure what she meant, but from then on I thought of them as Harry and Sylvia.

"Let these people eat in peace." I imitated Sylvia's rasping voice.

"Why does he have to sit on a cushion?" Mother said.

I choked on my ham, and she spewed iced tea into her napkin. We couldn't quit laughing. Finally we had to abandon our dinners. Still snickering, Mother pushed my wheelchair out of the dining room while everyone stared at us.

Mother and I shared a room, which embarrassed me, but I was also grateful for her company. We took turns undressing behind a Chinese screen in the corner, and later, as I lay on the hard mattress in my four-poster bed, I listened to Mother's even breathing in the next bed and held my aching knee. I stayed awake for a long time, imagining Harry's eyes watching Mother from the corner of the room.

The next morning I had my first mud treatment. Someone rapped on our door at seven to wake us, and Mother and I had a quiet breakfast of eggs and bacon in the dining room. Only a few other guests were there, and they all seemed to be the sick ones—in wheelchairs or bent over their plates in a twisted way. I looked around for the woman on the stretcher who'd been on our bus, and the fat man, but they were nowhere to be seen. They'd get breakfast in bed, I decided. Being among sick people again brought my condition home, and I felt my heart thump dully in my chest.

"There's our friend Harry Smith," Mother said. "Or is it Jones?" She cut her eyes over to a table next to the wall. Harry was eating alone. He looked even smaller and skinnier than he had the previous evening. He wore an ordinary white shirt, brown trousers, and a linen jacket, but somehow he did not look ordinary. He was again sitting on his rubber cushion.

"Wonder how he managed to get that cushion in here all by himself," Mother said.

I was feeling so nervous that all I could do was shrug. Her efforts to distract me seemed frivolous and coldhearted.

"No need to worry," Mother said. "The treatment is painless."

"How do you know?"

"They assured me."

Harry turned, as if drawn by the sound of my mother's voice. He nodded once and then turned back to his toast and coffee and the *Chicago Tribune*.

"Who assured you?"

But she was watching Harry, studying him, so I went back to my breakfast. I tried to imagine what Dottie B. was doing at that very minute—probably reading L. Frank Baum

in bed. If she'd been at Mudlavia, eating breakfast with us, I told myself, she would've ignored Harry and tried to comfort me. But I couldn't imagine Dottie there, couldn't imagine anyone I knew there. That's when I realized how far from home we were.

After breakfast my attendant, who turned out to be the tall man with the squarish head who'd boarded our bus and welcomed us to Mudlavia, wheeled me into a long, narrow ward at the end of the first floor. The room was lined with rows of small metal-framed cots. Men lay on the cots, but I could see only their faces and hair—their bodies were covered with mud. Eyes watched me pass. Attendants were bustling up and down the aisles between the cots, pushing carts of steaming mud.

Buster, as he told me to call him, stopped beside an empty cot lined with a few inches of mud and asked me to remove my clothes and give them to him.

I couldn't think how to tell him that I couldn't possibly do either thing.

Buster squeezed my shoulder. "We're used to naked bodies round here. People with clothes on look strange to me!"

His words only made me more self-conscious, but I untied my shoes and took them off, and then slowly took off my socks, pants, shirt, and undershirt, and finally my undershorts. I held the bundle of clothes in front of me, burning with humiliation.

"Lie down there," Buster said. He snatched up my bundle and stuffed it into a wire basket. "Be back directly."

I rolled onto the cot, twisting my knee as I did so. The canvas sagged down inside the frame, so lying there was like being in a shallow tub full of warm mud. I stared up at the beams in the ceiling. Despite the heat in the room, I began to shiver. I listened to flies buzzing and someone breathing beside me.

Finally a voice said, "Hello there, young man." Harry Jones was lying in the next cot.

I'd been so distracted that I hadn't been looking left or right, but now I fixed my eyes on his cadaverous face. I couldn't look at the rest of him. "I'm Matthew," I said. For some reason I didn't tell him my last name.

Harry pointed to a big room adjoining ours. "They dig up the mud out back and heat it up in that room there, over the wood fires. Then they dip it up into buckets and put those buckets on the carts. Here comes my man now." Harry pointed to an attendant and a cart coming toward us up the aisle. "Watch and see how it's done." He winked at me.

"Yes, sir," I said, grateful for his unpatronizing manner. I watched as his attendant, a wiry little man with a narrow red face, pushed the cart up next to Harry. He took a small bucket from the side of the cart and dipped it down into the big bucket of mud, bringing up a steaming heap. He tipped the bucket and, starting at the toes, poured the mud over Harry in a slow, leisurely way, as if he were watering a

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garden. He refilled the bucket and repeated the process until Harry was covered with a thick layer of mud up to his chin. Then he leveled the mud off with a strip of metal and scraped the extra mud back into an empty bucket. "Relax and get healthy," the attendant said. He wheeled his cart down the aisle toward the mud room.

"Is it hot?" I asked Harry.

"Like a nice warm bath."

I saw Buster starting up the aisle with a cart. I asked Harry, "How long?"

"Not long enough. Hour every day. You'll look forward to it."

I had a squeeze of panic when the first bucket tipped over me and mud began sliding over my feet. I held my breath, waiting to be scorched, but as Harry had said, it was like a warm bath. When Buster had finished, he said, "Relax and get well." I was plastered to the cot. I couldn't move, and didn't want to. The oddly pleasant smell filled my nose, and I realized that I'd always wanted to play in mud, to pick it up and squeeze it, smear it on my body, lie down and roll in it. I remembered the day that Dottie B. and I had come

water to drink and wiped my sweaty face. When he pulled me off my cot, breaking me out of my cocoon of drying mud, I had the sensation of landing again on earth after being away for years and years. I felt both younger and older at the same time, and I was no longer self-conscious. Buster escorted me, naked, out of the room and into another room lined with showers. Old men and their attendants were busy scrubbing. I looked for Harry, but didn't see him. I stood on the green-tile floor, and Buster scrubbed my back and legs with a big rag; then he left me to wash the mud off my front as best I could. My knee still ached, but I told myself it felt a little bit better. In a bathrobe Buster gave me, I rested awhile in the cooling room. Later, after I'd dressed, Buster wheeled me along a dirt path toward the front porch. "What will you be when you grow up?" he asked me.

I answered without hesitation. "An Olympic champion in the high jump and the long jump."

"You heard of Ray Ewry?" he asked.

"Of course! The Human Frog!" Ray Ewry, my idol, had gone to college at Purdue, in West Lafayette, and I'd read all about his triumphs in the *Daily Courier*. Ray had won

ten Olympic gold medals, in the standing high, standing long, and standing triple jumps—more than any other Olympic athlete has ever won. He might've won more medals if his events had not been discontinued after 1912.

"You know, Ray Ewry was a cripple when he was a boy," Buster said. "Polio."

Yes, I told him, I knew that. The fact that Ewry had had polio was included in every story I'd read about him.

"Doctor told him to take up jumping to strengthen his legs," Buster said.

"And the rest is history!" I said cheerfully, though I felt anything but cheerful. I didn't have polio. I only had a sore knee. Was Buster

trying to tell me that I was a cripple too?

Buster wheeled me up a ramp onto the porch, where my mother, in her puffed-sleeve blouse with the pearl buttons, sat in a rocking chair doing needlepoint. She took my hand, and I noticed the mud still caked underneath my fingernails.

"Won't ever get it all off," Buster said, hanging over us. "See you when the cock crows." He ruffled my hair, turned, and lumbered off the porch.

Mother and I smiled at each other.

"So it went well?" Mother dropped her needlepoint in her lap—a picture of three roses, but she'd done only half of one. Our house was full of her framed needlepoint pic-



Gentlemen's Cooling Room at Mudlavia Health Resort, Xramer, Ind.

back from playing in the creek behind her house, and how horrified my mother had been. She had sent me straight to the bath. She made me promise never to go near the creek again, and I kept my word. But mud was good. Dirt was good. It was healthful!

My body relaxed under the mud blanket. I was an Indian, hiding from white men. Or a leech, waiting for my next victim. Or a log, buried in a creek bank. This forced passivity was a peculiar feeling. Freeing, somehow.

"You're right, Mr. Jones," I said, turning my head toward him. But his eyes were closed, and he seemed to be asleep.

The time passed too quickly. Buster brought me cool

tures. I hoped she was losing interest in them. "Tell me all about it," she said.

For some reason I didn't describe how pleasurable it had been. I think I felt a bit guilty about how much I'd enjoyed it. I also left out the part about talking to Harry. I wanted to paint a braver picture of myself, or maybe I was wary of letting her know my changed opinion of him. She listened to me, but I could tell she wanted me to hurry up. When I finished, she picked up her needlepoint and began stitching again.

"I've got a scary story to tell you," she said, staring intently at her work. "One of the ladies over there told it to me. Don't look."

I did look, annoyed that her story was usurping mine. All along the ivy-clad porch were groups of white-wicker chairs and tables. Three women sat at one table sipping glasses of lemonade. They were all middle-aged, fat, and dressed in starched shirtwaists and full skirts, their gray hair coiled at the napes of their necks. None of them looked as if she had an interesting bone in her body.

"I said don't look," Mother whispered.

I sighed and stared out at the gardens. It was mid-morning, already hot in the sun, but the porch was shady and cooler, and the gladiolas and zinnias looked bright and fresh. The air smelled of cut grass and soap from the laundry. The limestone fountain gurgled. A young man and woman strolled down the path toward the woods. He held a pink-and-green-striped parasol over her head. He said something in her ear and she jerked away, but then, a few steps later, she allowed him to take her hand.

"One of those ladies is from Chicago," Mother said, still stitching. "She's here with her husband, a banker. He's taking the cure."

"That's a story?"

"She said that this place is a gambler's paradise. Listen." She lowered her voice. "They have card games in the back parlor, all night sometimes. For high stakes. They drink gin. Most of the people here are from Chicago. Gangsters, or friends of gangsters. That man with the cushion—Harry Jones isn't really his name—is some big mob boss, hiding out from the law. We're in a *nest* of criminals."

"Really?" I sounded more shocked than I was. I'd been to Chicago only twice, to shop for new school clothes, and had found it a dark, claustrophobic place. That one would want to escape if one could seemed only natural. Surely not even gangsters would misbehave here, I thought. I noticed that one of the middle-aged women had a bee crawling down her back. I hoped it would sting her.

"Well?" Mother said, frowning at me. "What should we do? Now that we know?"

I didn't even think to question the woman's claim. It might have been an out-and-out lie, or more likely an exaggeration, but both Mother and I wanted to believe it. "My knee is feeling better," I said, bending it a few times. That was a lie. It felt the same.

Mother nodded and looked relieved. "There's our answer," she said.

"Hello there!" Harry Jones was calling to us from across the porch. He tipped his straw hat in our direction. The woman with bobbed hair stood behind him, clutching his rubber cushion. The parrot teetered on her shoulder.

Mother and I smiled and waved back as though we hadn't just been maligning him, as if he were one of our friends. For a second I was afraid he'd come over and tell Mother about our conversation that morning, but he merely called out, "Off to get some sun!" He and the woman walked arm in arm down the porch steps.

"I suppose," Mother said, rocking too hard in her chair, "that you can tell who his current lady friend is by taking note of who's carrying his cushion." She clucked. "As if he couldn't carry it himself." I heard a fondness in her voice, a fondness for Harry that I also felt.

I said, "He must be very sick. He's much too skinny."

"Poor man."

We watched him and his friend disappear down the garden path.

"A boss?" I asked Mother. "She said 'boss'?"

"Of one of the biggest crime rings."

I grinned.

"We can never tell your father about him," she said, meeting my eyes and clasping both my hands in hers. "Never ever. Promise?"

I promised without a second thought.

We sat awhile in silence, watching the strolling guests, and I marveled at the dishonesty and secrecy that hung so lightly in the sweet-smelling air of Mudlavia, air that had infected not only me but my own dear mother. It was strange, I thought, how much at home we both felt, and how quickly we had come to feel that way. I was suddenly sorry for the Dotties back home, who were no doubt having a very dull summer.

My days at Mudlavia fell into a comfortable pattern. I took my mud treatment every morning, always in the cot next to Harry's, and he and I chatted while we waited for our mud. He asked me questions about myself—my last name, where I was from, what my father did, what he was like, and so on. "Goodall," I told him. My mother's first name, I said, was Toots. We'd come from Attica. I told him that my father had once been a gendarme in Paris, but that he'd been fired for shooting a tourist. Now he was a fat farmer who raised cows. Lying became easier as I went along.

Harry nodded as he listened, and I have no idea whether he believed me or not. I think not. He told me he was from LaPorte, Indiana, and had worked as a mailman until he was stricken with crippling arthritis. He came to Mudlavia every summer. He was widowed. "My dear Ida passed five years ago this summer," he said. "Not a one

could ever take Ida's place." Ida? Mailman? I fixed a sad, sympathetic look on my face, admiring our ability to pretend. This was much more fun than making up plays.

"I can jump over a fence five feet high," I told him. "World record is six feet."

"No kidding," he said.

"I'd show you," I said, "but, you know." I pointed to my knee.

One morning, as we both lay under our mud compresses, Harry said, "This place is a con game. This mud's just mud. It won't cure me, but I don't care. I love it, but I never let on how much. If people knew how pleasant it was, they'd all be clamoring to get in, and there'd be no room for you and me."

"We won't tell them," I said, and we both nodded our heads, which was as good as a handshake.

Harry always fell asleep as soon as he was covered, but I would lie awake daydreaming, not of high jumping or Olympic glories, as before, but about being all alone, buried up to my neck in the red dirt of Arizona, or the dark earth of a Canadian forest, peering around at the strange and dramatic landscape. For the first time in my life I escaped the prison of my own body, and I found the sensation soothing and exhilarating at the same time.

While I took my treatments, Mother worked on her needlepoint roses and talked to the ladies on the porch, finding out bits of gossip about the guests. Many of them were part of the same Chicago mob family, she told me with a knowledgeable air, of which Harry Jones was the boss. He was wanted for the murder of a South Side butcher. I pictured a mean-faced butcher in a bloody apron. I wondered if Harry had shot him with a pistol or a shotgun. "The butcher probably deserved it," I told Mother, who said, "Matthew!" and then, "Probably so. Maybe they were in rival gangs." I still hadn't told her about my conversations with Harry. Because I'd started out keeping them secret, continuing to do so felt easiest, and so far he hadn't given me away—he'd only waved to us from afar.

After lunch Mother and I would retire to our room. Mother was slogging through a romance novel called *Go Forth and Find*, which she said was tedious. I'd brought along a few Frank Merriwell adventure stories. Heroic Frank was handsome, popular, good, and, most important, athletic. Time and again he won the day in boxing, baseball, football, fencing, lacrosse, crew, shooting, bicycle racing, or, my favorite, track. I loved Frank, but now, for some reason, his feats seemed obvious and pointless and didn't hold my interest, so I took to writing letters. Mother and I had agreed that we wouldn't mention the criminals to anyone we wrote to. We'd write only about the beauty and peace and quiet and the fact that my knee was steadily improving, which it wasn't.

"Should I tell Father I've seen the doctor?" I asked

Mother one afternoon. We hadn't seen a doctor around the place since we'd gotten there.

She put down her book. "Good idea," she said. "So he won't worry."

We didn't mention the fact that we'd yet to receive a letter from my father. My mother kept up her correspondence with her older sister, May, a spinster dressmaker who suffered from neurasthenia. Mother wrote enthusiastically to May about Mudlavia, trying, not very sincerely, to persuade her to join us, mentioning the healthful food, lithia water, and musical evenings along with the mud baths, but we both knew we were safe, because May wouldn't set foot outside her house in Cleveland if she could help it.

I also wrote to Dottie B. and Dottie C., telling them I'd met some "interesting guests from Chicago." Dottie C. never wrote back, but I knew I could count on Dottie B., because she liked to write. One day I received a postal with a photo of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and on it she said that she missed me "like crazy." I repeated this to myself over and over while Mother took a nap, and I stared out our window at the sky, which seemed always to be blue, listening to wasps buzzing against the screen. Many of the guests went hiking, or swimming in the creek, but Mother stayed with me. Often we would end the afternoon by sitting in the parlor with the other guests, or if it wasn't too hot, she would push me around the garden in my wheelchair. She seemed to be growing younger by the day. She moved in a stronger and more agile way, she laughed more, and her face glowed with sun.

One night, after Mother and I had just sat down in the dining room, Harry Jones and Sylvia Smith approached our table. Sylvia, wearing what looked like a man's suit coat and bow tie, dropped Harry's cushion in a chair and sat down beside him, a sullen expression on her face. Harry said hello to me and then turned to my mother. "Good evening, Mrs. Goodall. May we join you?" My mother gave me a look I've never forgotten. She was not just surprised that I'd ever even spoken to Harry but amazed, as if she'd never imagined I could be so strangely devious. An assessing glint was in her eye, as if she were rethinking everything she'd previously thought about me. But of course she couldn't have done all that, because in just a matter of seconds, during which I held my breath, not knowing what her reaction would be, she turned to Harry. "Certainly," she said. "Everyone calls me Toots."

Sylvia knocked back a glass of iced tea. "Toots," she said, to no one in particular.

Mother gave her a tepid smile.

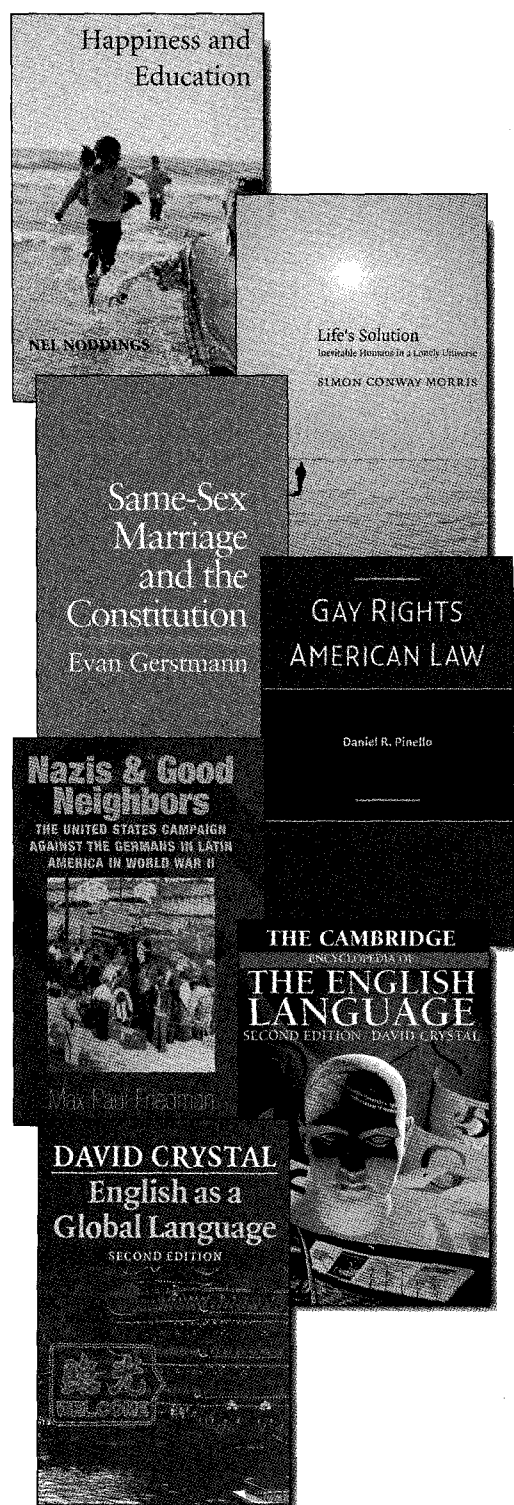
The piano player launched into his favorite song: "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag."

"Matthew tells me you're from Attica," Harry said to Mother. "You and your husband raise cows."

"Herefords," Mother said, nodding.

She knew nothing about cows. I couldn't even be-

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lieve she'd come up with "Herefords." I knew she couldn't pull it off.

Sylvia must've had this thought too. "Tell us about cows," she said to my mother. "Harry here don't know a thing about cows."

"Surely we can find something else to discuss," Harry said. "Toots is probably sick and tired of cows."

"We both are," I said. "Tired of cows."

"Well, no, actually," Mother said. "I never tire of cows." While the waiter served our drinks, Mother proceeded to describe our life in Attica, our herd of cows, our team of Belgian horses, and our chickens—good layers. It was my turn to marvel. But then I realized she was simply describing her own childhood on a farm in Ohio, a place I'd never seen and she rarely talked about, because her parents had died before I was born.

Sylvia made a few snide comments and then stared across the room as if she were deep in thought. Finally, right in the middle of dinner, she got up and left the table, giving me a sneer. I was the only one who acknowledged her leaving.

The next evening Harry joined us for dinner again, this time carrying his own cushion. His lady friends sat across the room at another table, their backs to us. The parrot, perched on the shoulder of the woman with bobbed hair, turned to face us, his head cocked, as if he were spying on us. That evening I noticed a hint of repressed excitement in the flush of Mother's cheeks, her sputtering laugh, the way she leaned toward Harry when he spoke. He asked her about my father's experience as a gendarme in Paris, and the tourist he shot.

"It was a crazy man, the tourist," Mother said. "A butcher. An Algerian butcher waving a knife. My husband was simply doing his duty."

A butcher! She'd said "butcher"! But Harry's expression didn't change. He asked her about Paris, and she began to talk about Algerian restaurants and the Louvre Museum as if she'd actually seen them. Although they mostly ignored me, I was thrilled by the whole thing, thrilled by my mother's lies and my part in getting them started, thrilled that someone like Harry found us desirable.

I ate my soggy baked Alaska, looking around to see who'd noticed us sitting with Harry. Nobody paid us any attention, but that didn't quell my excitement. My hand, with its mud-caked fingernails, reached for my water glass again and again. I had become a dirty person. Mud had invaded every crevice of my body, and I was always picking off little patches that the shower hadn't washed away. I thought about how I could present this place to Dottie B., how much to tell—the rubber cushion, the parrot, a woman in a man's suit coat?—and how much to leave out, and how impressed she'd be.

After dinner Harry left us with a bow, disappearing into one of the back parlors.

"Sin City," Mother said, cocking one eyebrow.

I asked Mother, "If everybody knows these people are criminals, how come nobody calls the cops?"

"Don't say 'how come,'" Mother said. "Don't say 'cops.'" Then she rubbed her fingers and thumb together. "Boodle," she whispered, and we both snickered.

On the way out of the dining room she pushed my chair past the parrot, who turned to watch us, his beady eyes blinking. I lurched toward him. He gave a loud squawk, flapped off his perch, and then swooped low over the tables and circled the dining room like a mutant bat, causing the diners to shriek and duck. The bobbed woman leaped up and charged after him. Finally the bird perched at the top of one of the tall windows, and as we left I heard the bobbed woman imploring him to come down. "Tyrone," she was calling. "Come to Mama." Mother called me Tyrone for the rest of the evening.

So Mother and I were having a grand time. The only trouble was that my knee wasn't getting any better. For the first week it didn't feel worse, and I credited the treatment, but now I think the wheelchair might've been the reason. Then it began to hurt worse, with an even sharper pain that kept me awake at night. I didn't say a word about the pain, didn't even acknowledge it to myself. Harry's lady friends had disappeared, and he began sitting with us every night at dinner, and Mother and I were having too much fun thinking of ways to get him to reveal his true identity. We got bolder and bolder.

"So how did you carry your mailbag?" Mother asked him. "Over which shoulder?"

"Right, of course," Harry said. "We're required to."

"What's the most collected stamp ever?" I asked him.

"Pocahontas five-cent." He took a slurp of his cold cucumber soup. He always answered our questions without hesitation, and he could've been telling the truth, of course, though we preferred not to think so.

One morning I got another postal from Dottie B. "We saw your father in downtown Indianapolis," she wrote. "He was walking with your cousin. What a stylish lady! Her skirt was up almost to her knees and she wore a sailor hat. I pestered Mother till she bought me a sailor hat too." Something told me, even at age ten, to rip this postal up before Mother could see it.

"Your mother is a beautiful woman," Harry said to me the next morning when we lay on our cots, covered with mud. "But don't tell her I said that."

"I won't," I said, even though his tone indicated that he wanted me to tell her. Everything said at Mudlavia seemed to mean just the opposite. I didn't like his saying that my mother was beautiful, because it was true, and the whole point of our relationship was to tell lies. Mother doesn't really like you, I wanted to tell him. She's just pretending. But I knew that she and I were only pretending not to like him. It was all too confusing. "Mother likes you," I was surprised to hear myself say. "I do too," I added.

"Really?" he said, grinning at me. He was so thin that he looked like pictures I'd seen of Egyptian mummies. "She does? Really?"

I assured him that she did, but I was surprised to find myself hurt that he cared about Mother more than about me. I'd thought of us as the new threesome, now that his lady friends were out of the picture. "My father has a lady friend," I said to Harry, and told him about the postal I'd received the day before. He listened to me intently, frowning, and without saying a word. I expected him to express shock and outrage, to jump up and do something, or to at least promise to do something. When he continued to lie there, silent and unmoving, I felt a cold anger welling underneath my mud-warmed skin. I'd confided in him because, despite all the games we were playing, I believed that he would want to help us. I'd thought he was our friend.

That night at dinner I watched him joking and talking with Mother, listening to her silly replies. They didn't seem to notice that I wasn't participating in their little charade. I realized, with a sickening feeling, that I had served my purpose and was now expendable. I didn't like the way he stared at Mother, and I didn't like the way she gazed back at him. I'd never seen her look at anyone else that way. It was as if she'd been infected by some strange virus and couldn't help herself. I sulked through dinner, refusing to meet their eyes, grunting and shrugging when I was addressed. Before Mother could finish her cherry Bavarian cream, I told her I was tired and wanted to turn in early. I hoped she would read in bed and keep me company, but she tucked me in and said she was going back down to sit on the porch. It was too hot to read upstairs, she said. Did I mind?

"What happened to the parrot lady?" I asked Mother, who was brushing her hair in front of the mirror. "And Sylvia? Where'd they go? Maybe he rubbed them out."

She rewound her hair in a bun and dug a tortoiseshell comb into it. "Don't be silly," she said.

"Harry says this place is a con game," I said. "He says the mud is just ordinary."

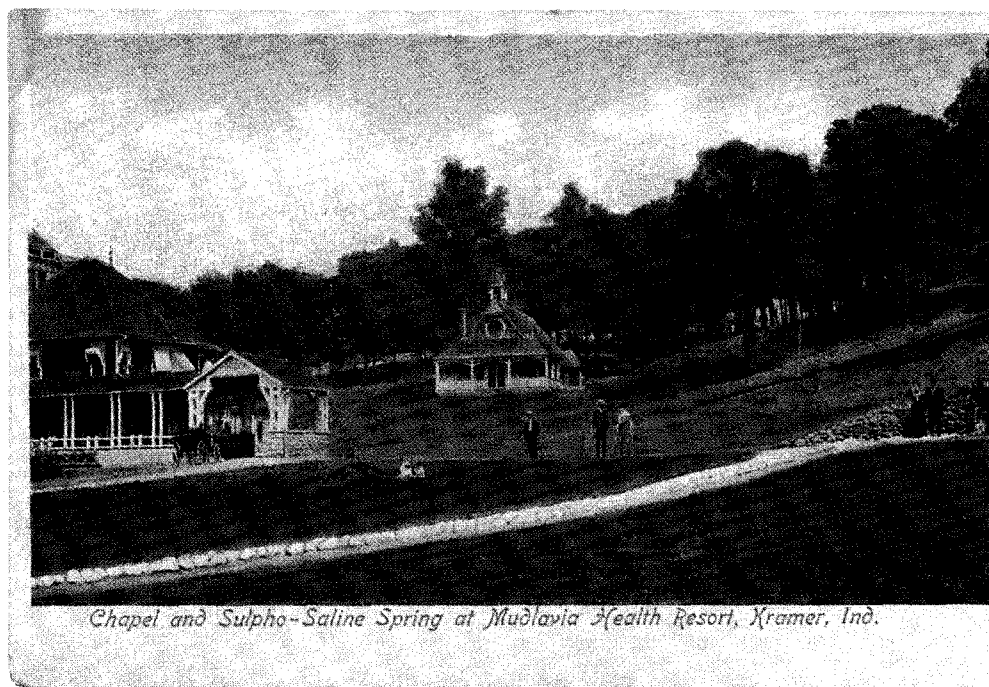
"Go to sleep," she said.

I lay in bed, sweating in my nightshirt, imagining how I was going to get even. I considered calling the cops and ratting on Harry; then I decided to write a letter to Father, not mentioning Harry but asking him to come and get us. I was sorry that I'd ratted on my father, and I asked God for forgiveness. I finally dozed off. When I woke up, a full moon hung outside my window, and Mother's bed was still

empty. I clambered out of bed, ignoring the throbbing in my knee, and hopped to the window, where I stuck my head outside, hoping to feel a breeze on my face.

Then I heard Mother and Harry talking on the porch. Their voices were quiet and intimate. I heard no teasing or laughing, no protesting or measured politeness. For the first time since we'd been there, I was hearing the sound of honest speech, and it spooked me. I couldn't see them, and strain as I might, I couldn't make out their words. Were they sitting side by side? Or standing, looking up at the moon? A sharp, stabbing pain went through my knee, and I collapsed on the floor. As I lay there, stinging truths seeped into my conscious mind, drop by drop. Something was very wrong with my knee. I would never be an Olympic champion. I would never jump again. Never use my leg again. Never.

I crawled underneath the bed and curled up in a ball. Mother finally found me there when she came in. "My God!" she said. "What's happened?" She kneeled in front of the bed, sounding satisfyingly terrified.



I rolled out from my hiding place. "My knee's been hurting worse and worse," I said. "It's not getting better." I started to cry then, relieved to be telling the truth, but feeling that I was tricking her all the same, and doing it for her own good. For our own good.

She laid a cool hand on my forehead. "We'll see the doctor first thing in the morning," she said, and I could hear the despair in her voice. "I'm sorry. I'm a terrible mother. I'll never forgive myself."

I closed my eyes and said nothing.

The next morning Mother found the Mudlavia doctor playing poker in Sin City, and he advised her to take me immediately to a hospital. Mother notified my father and made arrangements; we sat in the lobby with our suitcases

all morning, waiting to leave. Many people stopped to wish us well, including Buster. He bowed to Mother and shook my hand. "The Human Frog didn't go to the Olympics till he was twenty-six," Buster said. "Remember that." I could give him only a distracted smile. Harry never appeared, and Mother never left my side. That afternoon she and I began a journey to Chicago's Augustana Hospital. The doctor declared that I had a malignant tumor in my knee, and half my leg had to be removed. If we'd waited much longer, the surgeon told us, I might be dead.

TO SMOKE

Even now when we
can no longer remember
how much of the scent
of the world we gave up
life after life in the hope
of being able to hold
something in our hands

we recognize you at once
every time without fail
day or night wherever
you may be coming from
across the hill or
under the door
and we imagine you
even when you are not there
we can never be sure
you reach all the way to us
out of somewhere we have forgotten
we wake into dreams of you
as the bees do
hoping it is not true

the world is burning
you have always been warning
us too late and only
as you were leaving
ghost of what we have known
something reminds us of you
in the fragrance of morning
in the opening flowers
in a breath at the moment
it seems to be ours

*W.S. Merwin's most recent publications include a verse translation of
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (2002) and a poetry collection, The Pupil (2001).*

We returned to Lafayette, where I was fitted with a wooden prosthesis and began my life as a cripple, learning to hobble around my bedroom with the help of Mother and Dottie B. My mother acted falsely chipper and then wept periodically in her bedroom, muffled, gasping sobs. I assumed she was crying for me and feeling guilty, but the situation was more complicated than that. Three months later, when I could finally manage to get downstairs on my own, using a cane, I told Mother I was going to walk across the street, alone, to Dottie B's. I can't

remember if she encouraged or discouraged me, but it wouldn't have mattered. I was determined to go.

Since I'd last been outside, the seasons had changed. The world had gone gray and cold. It was only midafternoon, but the lights were already shining in Dottie's house. I left Mother standing on our porch, arms folded, watching me go. When I reached Dottie's front steps and turned to wave, she'd already gone back inside. Did she act different right before I left? I couldn't say, because I'd been preoccupied with making my escape, with getting some relief from her weeping.

A couple of hours later I returned home, sweating with exhaustion. When I called for Mother, she didn't answer. Upstairs, in my parents' bedroom, I saw that her clothes were gone from the wardrobe. I rummaged around the house for a note, all the while knowing I'd never find one. She had taken the sudden opportunity to leave, and she hadn't wanted to linger long enough to write a note, having no idea when I'd return. Maybe she told herself she'd send me a letter when she got to wherever she was going, thinking that a letter would be better than a note anyway. She'd have time to really think about what she wanted to say.

On her bedside table lay *Go Forth and Find*, a leather bookmark near the middle. Later I read the book cover to cover. It was a romance as banal and un-

TO A TORTOISESHELL LYRE

Do you know how beautiful you are
did you ever know such a thing

oh hollow cradle of light
large as an empty embrace
shape of old waves
and of supplication and offering
fashioned out of all
the ambers of memory

here at the center
at the deepest part
where your heart has been
the notes were plucked
once according to
a time of music
to accompany the singing
that someone claimed
would be here forever

here your heart began
as an echo
in answer to the sea
here once you heard
how the light came through it

—W. S. MERWIN

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believable as the stories of Frank Merriwell's athletic prowess, and I assured myself that the book hadn't influenced her in any way. She'd read many such romances, and surely she knew how far-fetched they were. Besides, she'd told me it was tedious. She hadn't finished it, and didn't bother to take it with her, because maybe, at long last, she'd found the real thing. I wanted very much to believe that.

One afternoon, not long after her departure, Father sat on the sofa beside me in the parlor, wearing only his undershirt and pajama pants, his fake glasses and moustache gone, his stopwatch abandoned.

"You sure?" he kept asking me. "She didn't talk to any men?"

I never mentioned Harry Jones to anyone. I told myself that I was keeping our secret, and that Mother wouldn't have wanted me to blab, but that was only part of it. Harry Jones seemed like a fantasy, a figment of our imagination, and I didn't want to expose him to the harsh light of conventional Lafayette. Besides, she could've gone anywhere, with anyone.

"None?" my father said again. "No men at all?"

I recalled her saying good-bye to Buster, thanking him profusely. "Nobody except Buster," I told my father, and he wrote the name in a notebook.

I felt terrible that I might've caused Buster some trouble, so I lashed out. "Dottie told me she saw you in Indianapolis. With your cousin."

He flushed but didn't hesitate. "That's preposterous. I haven't gone anywhere near Indianapolis in months." Then he gave me his superintendent's smile. "Dottie's not too bright, son." He patted my good leg, got up, and left the room. He never again pestered me about Mudlavia, and after a while he refused to speak about my mother at all.

For a while I thought about trying to write to Harry, or waiting till I got a little older and looking him up in Chicago, but I did neither of these things, telling myself that Harry Jones couldn't possibly be his real name. I tried to accept my losses, feeling deep down that I was at fault for losing both my leg and my mother. Of course, when I was angry, I also had to ask myself how she could have gone off and left her only son. Especially one who needed her so badly. Perhaps it was *because* I needed her so badly. Or perhaps her flight had nothing to do with me, or with my father, or with Harry Jones, or with anything or anyone we knew about. I kept expecting to turn around and see her, and often thought I heard her calling me on the street. Even now, even though she's long dead, I'm still waiting for her to reveal herself, wearing her egret-feather hat.

After I went away to college in Bloomington, I received a letter from my mother's sister, May, in Cleveland, whom I hadn't seen or heard from in years. Aunt May wondered if my father had told me the truth about what happened to my mother. My mother had written to me many times,

the letter said, but May suspected that Father had never shown me her letters. My father, she wrote, had been notified that Mother was hit by a trolley and killed not even a year after she left home. She'd been living alone in San Francisco, working in a hat shop, trying to make a new start. Someone had sent her the money to go out there, set herself up, and hire a lawyer. She'd served my father with divorce papers, which he'd refused to sign. "You must believe," my aunt wrote, "that your mother loved you and didn't want to leave you. She intended to send for you, but she had to escape first." May said that she had no idea who had given my mother the money she needed, but I thought I knew.

I fired off a blistering letter to my father, but he didn't respond. He continued to pay my tuition and expenses, but after I graduated we didn't speak again for seven years, until after the birth of my first child.

I did hate my father for a while, but I never could bring myself to hate my mother. Even now I'd give anything to be with her again, to sit close to her the way I did on the bus to Mudlavia, to laugh with her as we did in the dining room, to hear her breathing quietly in the bed next to mine. I long to go back in time, before everything changed, and in this, I realize, I'm no different from anyone else. Life eventually takes away everything it gives.

Five months after my mother left, America entered World War I. My father began spending more and more time in Indianapolis, and we moved there when he took a position as superintendent of the Indianapolis public schools. Dottie B. and I married young. I worked my way through medical school in Bloomington and became an orthopedic surgeon. Dottie B. wrote a number of popular children's books, including one best seller: *The Floosenettes Go to Mars*. We had five children. Our oldest son, a farmer with young children of his own, suffocated in a grain bin at age thirty-three. Our youngest daughter, when she was twenty-nine, won a medal in kayaking at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal. I never returned to Mudlavia, but I read in the newspaper that it burned down, and was rebuilt, and burned down again, and today is a pile of rubble.

In the late summer I always remember Mudlavia, and not with any bad feelings. I remember the gurgling fountain and the hollyhocks, the wide porch, the soggy baked Alaska. Buster saying, in his southern drawl, "Relax and get well." Harry whispering, "This place is a con game." I remember lying beneath the mud, soaking it up, the stillness and the smell and the flies buzzing, forgetting myself, forgetting that I was even a human being with all the worries and vanities and self-deception that go along with it, and I think that if I could've stayed there forever, buried in mud, I might've had a happy life, instead of simply a good one. ▀

Elizabeth Stuckey-French teaches fiction writing at Florida State University. The paperback edition of her novel, Mermaids on the Moon, was issued in July.

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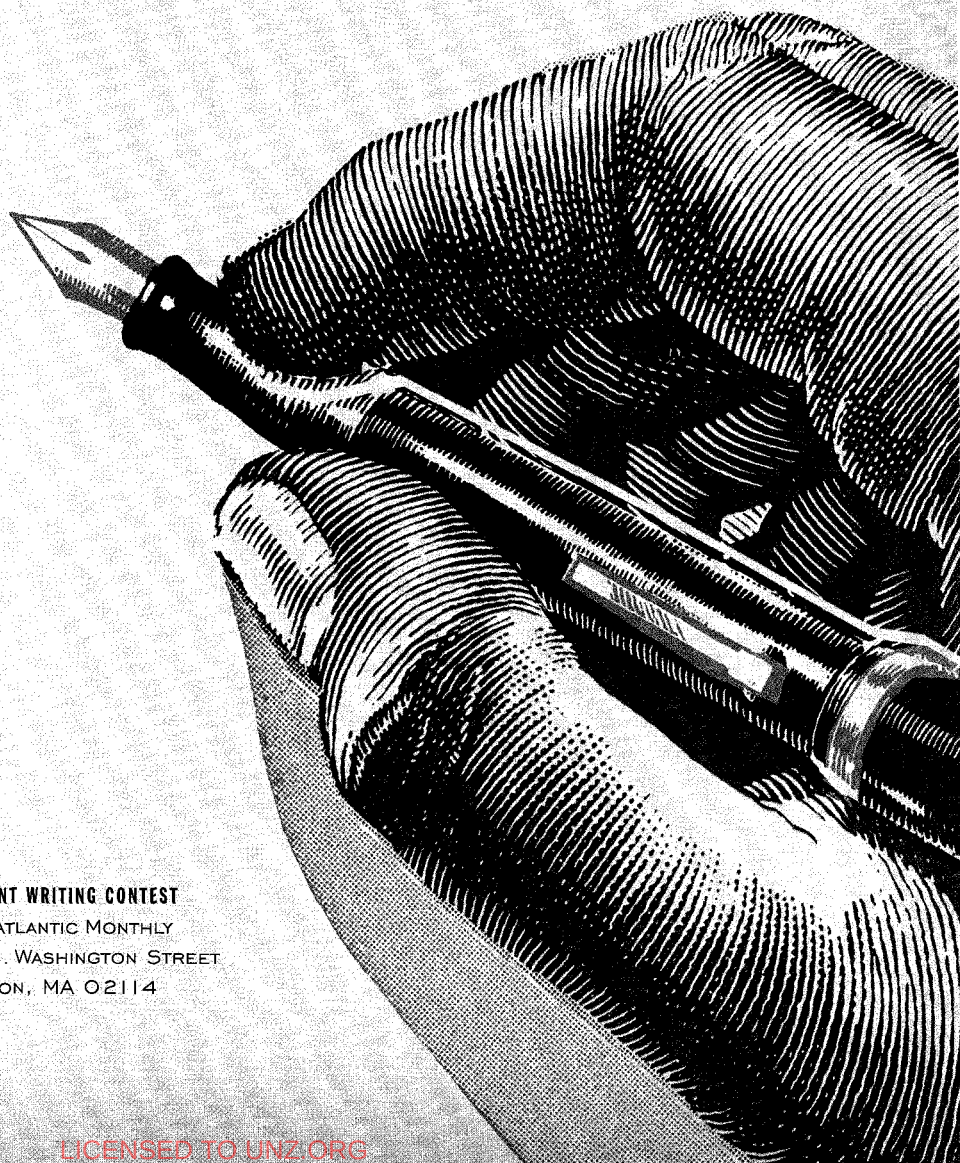
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BOOKS & CRITICS

THIS MONTH:

Housewife Confidential

"The kind of childhood that many of us remember so fondly ... was possible partly because each block contained houses in which women were busy but close by, all too willing to push open a window and yell at the neighbor boy to get his fool bike out of the street."

A tribute to the old-fashioned housewife, by Caitlin Flanagan

PAGE 141

"Loosie!"

Mona Simpson reviews *Ball of Fire*, by Stefan Kanfer, about the making and breaking of the great collaboration between Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz

PAGE 151

Encore

Saul and Patsy, by Charles Baxter, reviewed by James Marcus

PAGE 152

Where the Twain Should Have Met

"Edward Said cannot allow that direct Western engagement in [Arab lands] is legitimate. This might be a narrowly defensible position if direct Islamist interference in Western life and society had not become such a factor." Christopher Hitchens examines Said's introduction to the reissue of *Orientalism*

PAGE 153

California Catholics

Thomas Mallon reviews Maile Meloy's much anticipated novel *Liars and Saints*

PAGE 160

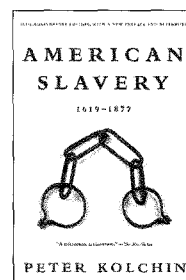
NEW & NOTEWORTHY

What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

The study of slavery is the glory of American historiography. No other aspect of our history has inspired scholarship of such sophistication and subtlety. (In fact, the single greatest work of U.S. history since the Second World War, Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, examines the world of the slaves.) And fittingly, no overview of any historical subject is more masterly, fair-minded, and elegant than Kolchin's book. In less than 300 pages he elucidates, from the point of view of both the slaves and the slaveholders, the history of a protean institution that evolved radically, along with white and black attitudes, over two and a half centuries as it spread westward and responded to different agricultural and industrial needs. Recently the authors of a number of books on the subject, understandably appalled by its brutality, have produced little more than defiant indictments of human bondage, a topic about which there would seem already to be some moral agreement. In contrast, Kolchin's approach is cool; he seeks to dissect and explain slavery rather than to expose and condemn it. This is especially important because he emphasizes a particularly fraught aspect of his subject: the intimate and intertwined relations between masters and slaves. He points out that the relatively high ratio of whites to blacks, along with the small size of plantations in the American South, constituted the most conspicuous difference between that slave society and those in other areas of the New World. These conditions usually assured intense day-to-day contact between slaves and slaveholders, in which master and slave often worked alongside each other in the fields, ate together, and worshipped in the same churches. Such relationships, of course, were hardly benign, and one can easily argue that American slavery—a system built on unlimited violence, in which affection and dependency flowed inevitably into hatred, brutality, and self-contempt—was all the more terrible for its paradoxes and moral entanglements. That institution, Kolchin reveals, fiercely bound two peoples together in bitter opposition, forging a relationship based on such ambivalence and interdependence that neither could convey the simplest emotions without referring to the other. Kolchin's isn't the only superb overview of slavery; John Boles's *Black Southerners, 1619–1869* examines this complex subject largely from the slaves' perspective.



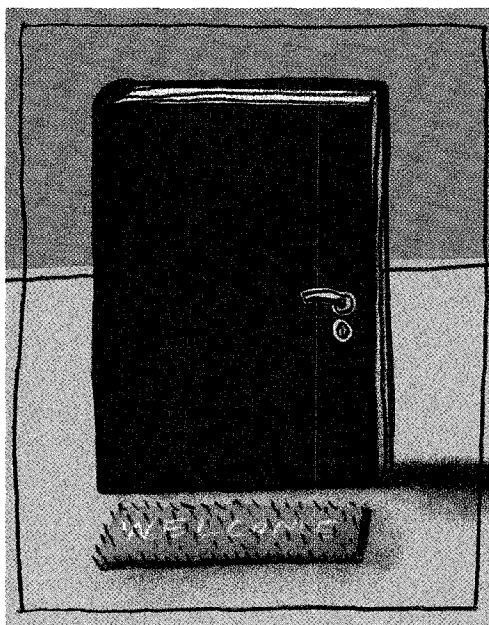
AMERICAN SLAVERY
by Peter Kolchin
Hill and Wang

Although Boles's treatment of slave Christianity (and particularly of the interweaving of white and black Christianity) is even more astute than Kolchin's, *American Slavery* is a richer survey, and is especially sophisticated in its comparative approach (Kolchin's second book, *Unfree Labor*, explained the resemblances and differences between American slavery and Russian serfdom) and in its examination of the economics of slavery and its analysis of slave resistance. Originally published in 1993, the book has just been reissued in a second, revised edition with a new afterword and a thoroughly updated bibliographical essay of nearly fifty pages (the most astute and authoritative assessment of slavery scholarship that exists). Fluently written and a masterpiece of compression, this is one of the very few books that every American should own (it costs \$14.00)—and read.

HISTORY

MARIANNE IN CHAINS, by Robert Gildea (Metropolitan Books). The German occupation during the Second World War remains the great blemish on the French nation and an episode that still engenders shame, bitterness, recrimination, and evasion. In this stunning work Gildea, a professor of modern European history at Oxford, attempts to move "beyond praise and blame" to explore the ever shifting lines between accommodation and defiance, cynicism and loyalty, and prudence and altruism that the French negotiated through their ordeal. He succeeds brilliantly. Unlike Julian Jackson's recent history, *France: The Dark Years*, this isn't a bureaucratic or political account; rather, Gildea examines the occupation on the ground, limiting his study to three departments in the Loire Valley, where he has meticulously and skeptically analyzed local archives (more than half the files he assessed had previously been closed) and the often contradictory testimony of surviving eyewitnesses. The complex picture that emerges will dismay those who like their history neat. The French devised informal but often clear rules

for collaboration (drinking with a German officer at a bar was acceptable, but having him to dinner at one's home was not), even as the distinction between cunning and treason remained blurry, and was often only a matter of timing, of "changing direction as the occasion demanded." Provincial mayors saw collaboration to protect their communities as a patriotic duty, and by and large their charges were and remain grateful for their efforts. "Resistance" could be a cloak for thuggishness, and those members of the Resistance whose violent actions provoked reprisals against the local populace were and



are often regarded by the community as irresponsible, if not criminal; and relations between occupier and occupied "were not always as brutal or even as one-sided as they have often been portrayed." In his nuanced and intricate work of historical reconstruction Gildea has grappled heroically with the ambiguity at the heart of history and in the heart of man.

ONE VAST WINTER COUNT, by Colin G. Calloway (Nebraska). The first volume in the publisher's new series History of the American West, this clearly written, monumental history of Native Americans and of white-Indian interaction in the trans-Appalachian West up to the beginning of the nineteenth century synthesizes a vast body of archaeological,

ethnographic, and historical scholarship. It will long remain the authoritative treatment of its subject. Calloway briefly discusses western prehistory, but four fifths of his story concerns the region after the arrival of the Spanish, in the sixteenth century, and the volume is most detailed (not surprisingly, given the weight of the historical record) in its analysis of the impact of whites—especially the diffusion of horses and the development of horse culture—on Native American life and on relations among Indian groups. Specifically, Calloway focuses on the contact and collisions between Indians and the

French in the Great Lakes region and the Ohio Valley, and of Indians and the Spanish in the Southwest. This, then, is primarily a frontier history, though Calloway emphasizes that the West contained a series of shifting frontiers, as Indian tribes and bands mingled and fought one another: the West, of course, was an arena of commerce, competition, expansion, and violence long before Europeans arrived. Each Indian community, Calloway's history vividly shows, "existed at the center of a kaleidoscopic world and had to hold its place as surrounding pieces rearranged themselves in response to outside influences and internal pressures."

RIBBENTROP, by Michael Bloch (Abacus/Trafalgar Square). Should one feel guilty about finding this definitive biography of Nazi Germany's Foreign Minister highly entertaining and often funny? A sardonic author, Bloch writes with exceptional grace and a sharp eye for the farcical—and his subject provides him with a wealth of material. Ribbentrop was a social-climbing champagne salesman who bumbled his way into Hitler's inner circle relatively late, but thereafter his ascent was as rapid as it was ridiculous. By 1936 this anglophile had been appointed ambassador to London—Germany's most crucial diplomatic posting. His tenure there did not go well. While presenting his credentials to George VI he gave the Nazi salute (such antics soon earned

Ribbentrop the sobriquet "Ambassador Brickendrop" from the cartoonist David Low). Reflecting the consensus of the establishment, one British diplomat declared, "He says less in longer time than anyone I have met." Sir Robert Vansittart found that Ribbentrop possessed "the sore vanity of a peacock in permanent moult." Snubbed and resentful, Ribbentrop was soon declaring Britain Germany's "most dangerous enemy," and by the time of the Munich crisis he was urging war. When Hitler named him Foreign Minister, in 1938 (a title he held until 1945), he saw as one of his most urgent tasks the introduction of diplomatic uniforms, and he quickly had a theatrical costumer design a wardrobe of them. (Upon seeing Ribbentrop in one of his new outfits, Göring told him, "You look like the doorman at the Rio-Rita Bar.") The most dramatic section of Bloch's book authoritatively reconstructs Ribbentrop's engineering of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, which prompted Hitler to hail him as "a second Bismarck," and which was probably the most stunning diplomatic volte-face in history. (Ribbentrop, Stalin, and Molotov negotiated and concluded the agreement in a mere thirteen hours. The swastika flags bedecking Moscow's airport for Ribbentrop's arrival had just been used in the Soviets' anti-Nazi propaganda films.) Bloch presents a forceful case that Ribbentrop's newly formed contempt for Britain caused the Second World War by provoking his repeated assurances to Hitler that the pusillanimous British and French wouldn't fight over Poland. On the basis of that advice, Bloch suggests, Hitler invaded that country. This charge isn't new (Ribbentrop's rivals in the Third Reich blamed him for fumbling into war), but it isn't convincing. Ribbentrop only confirmed Hitler in the course he would have followed anyway (and the conviction, shared by Hitler, that Britain would try to avoid living up to its commitment to defend Poland was by no means fanciful). Nevertheless, Bloch is a uniquely engaging narrative historian, and his use of biography to illuminate the most important diplomatic episodes in modern history is an enormous success.

LITERARY STUDIES

THE ART OF BURNING BRIDGES, by *Geoffrey Wolff* (Knopf). John O'Hara wrote more short stories for *The New Yorker* (more than 200) than any other writer in the magazine's history. Nearly all of his total 402 are first-rate. Two dozen or so—"Imagine Kissing Pete," "Graven Image," and "Bread Alone" among them—are masterpieces. (The ever hostile Richard Wright pronounced "Bread Alone" "the only story about Negroes by a white author" that he liked.) In his first book, *Appointment in Samarra*, O'Hara managed to write one of the most precise and subtle novels of manners—and one of the most unbearably taut depictions of social, psychological, and moral collapse—in modern American literature. But O'Hara was in some sense, and in his own eyes, a failure. He never won the literary world's admiration, for which he so pugnaciously hankered, and his work—especially the fat and sprawling novels, with their relentless accumulations of social minutiae, to which he dedicated the second half of his professional life—is now essentially forgotten. In this keen, stylish, and often acerbic portrait Geoffrey Wolff accounts unsparingly yet sympathetically for O'Hara's (mostly self-induced) disappointments. O'Hara has been the recipient of three previous biographers' exhaustive scrutiny, and Wolff has wisely chosen to rely greatly on their research in writing his far more impressionistic and imaginative life study. He is especially perceptive, and wickedly funny, regarding O'Hara's obsessive fascination with the local and national WASP aristocracy (even if he at times too crudely conflates the two) and his attendant and perpetual sense of exclusion. And he makes clear just how social insecurity fueled O'Hara as an artist even though it hobbled him as a man. More than any other writer of the second half of the twentieth century, O'Hara was acutely sensitive to subtle social distinctions and to how these define—in fact, determine—character: "To read him on a fashionable bar," Edmund Wilson wrote, "is to be shown on the screen of a fluoroscope gradations of social prestige of which one

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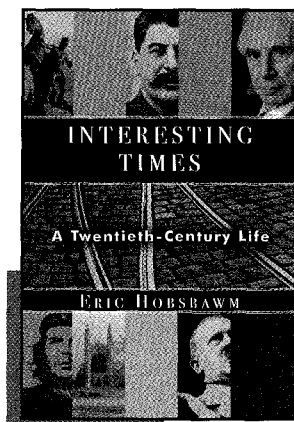
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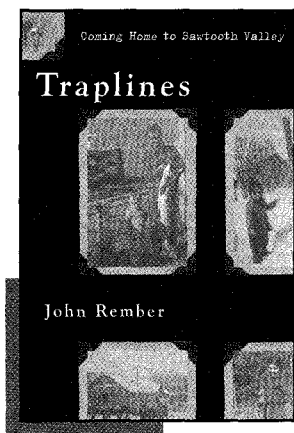
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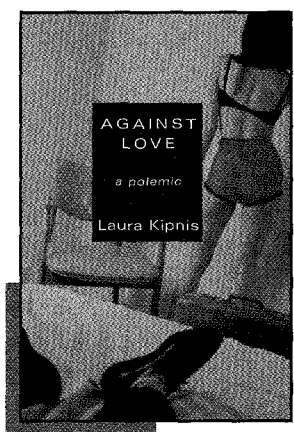
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had not before been aware." But O'Hara masked that profound insecurity with an aggressive vanity that made him at once contemptible, risible, and pitiable. It's impossible not to cringe at Wolff's exquisite accounts of O'Hara's efforts to buoy his ego (when *A Rage to Live* sold 100,000 copies, O'Hara insisted that Random House give him a cigarette box engraved with the words "... FROM HIS GRATEFUL PUBLISHERS AND THE FIRST HUNDRED THOUSAND PURCHASERS ...," which he had dictated himself), even as it's impossible not to feel sorry for a writer consistently "dismissed, mocked, scolded, and almost always patronized," as Wolff notes, by the magazine whose style he helped define. Just as readers begin to commiserate with O'Hara, though, Wolff forces them to remember that he was a famously mean drunk, in a world replete with mean drunks, who hit women and at least one midget (really). (In self-extenuation O'Hara offered an all too typical explanation: "Although I may often have felt like belting a woman, I have never actually taken a poke at one except in anger.") But Wolff fails to emphasize sufficiently O'Hara's stand-up renunciation in middle age of his drunken ways, a turnaround that permitted him to keep the regular schedule needed for the production of his ceaseless social chronicles. Wolff offers a remarkably sure and nuanced reading of O'Hara's best work, and he's obviously, and more or less justifiably, exasperated by such novels as *Ten North Frederick*, *From the Terrace*, and *Ourselves to Know* (to which he refers collectively and dismissively as "the tomes"). But in eschewing a considered discussion of the tomes, Wolff misses the one heroic aspect of O'Hara's failure: O'Hara stubbornly shunned his gifts in pursuit of a genre that suited his ambitions and his interests. With the important exceptions of his choice of wives and his devotion to his daughter, he was a compulsively self-destructive man.

ELSPETH HUXLEY, by C. S. Nicholls (St. Martin's). Best known for *The Flame Trees of Thika*, a highly fictionalized

account of her Anglo-Kenyan childhood between the wars, Elspeth Huxley was an exceptionally hardworking commentator and writer whose forty-two works include detective stories, travel books, memoirs, biography (at twenty-eight she published a two-volume life of the British Kenyan pioneer Lord Delamere), polemics (her *Race and Politics in Kenya* was for years an essential text that anatomized the dilemmas posed by colonial rule), and novels (her harrowing depiction of female circumcision in *Red Strangers* so alarmed her publisher, the future Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, that he refused it). Nicholls's quietly accomplished biography explores Elspeth's marriage to Gervas Huxley (cousin of Aldous and Julian) and her close and combative bond with her mother (parent and child were equally brilliant and obstreperous), which was the central relationship of her life. But most important, Nicholls probes with great sensitivity Huxley's literary and emotional attachment to Africa (despite extended regular visits, Huxley lived outside the continent all her adult life, but her early experiences there clearly defined her; and she remained forever entranced by it) and her complex and evolving views toward it and British rule there. Although, as the only female member of the 1960 Monckton Commission, which examined the future of British Africa, she endorsed a swift British withdrawal, critics charge that she was a "liberal apologist for white settlement." This is a fair accusation, but Huxley's qualified defense of the legacy of colonial rule was an entirely reasonable one. As Nicholls points out, that Huxley acknowledged that Africa had to be ruled (or misruled) by Africans did not diminish her sympathy for the white "men and women who introduced new farming methods into Kenya, and the ... young officials who battled to administer regions as vast as small countries." If this somewhat too thorough biography tells you more than you need to know, it's also full of arresting details—such as Huxley's expulsion from boarding school for running a horse-betting syndicate. ■

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor of The Atlantic.



BOOKS

HOUSEWIFE CONFIDENTIAL

A tribute to the old-fashioned housewife, and to Erma Bombeck, her champion and guide

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

.....

My mother's copy of *The Settlement Cook Book* (1948 edition) begins, as cookbooks used to, with instructions on the proper way to run a household. To air a room: "Lower the upper sash of one window and raise the lower sash of an opposite window." To remove a glue stain: "Apply vinegar with a cloth." There are sections on the feeding of infants and of invalids: "Use the daintiest dishes in the house. Place a clean napkin on the tray and, if possible, a fresh flower." My reaction to these household rules—and especially to the daily schedules for small children, which suggest thrilling mini-narratives of carefully lived days, of

cooked cereal at seven o'clock and diluted orange juice at nine o'clock—is in the nature of avidity. The way a lonely man in a motel room pores over *Playboy*, I pore over descriptions of ironing and kitchen routines; I have never made a solution composed of one part bleach and nine parts warm water, but the idea of such a solution and its many practical uses—wiping down an emptied refrigerator once a month, sanitizing a kitchen sink—commands my riveted attention. The notion of a domestic life that purrs along, with routines and order and carefully delineated standards, is endlessly appealing to me. It is also quite foreign, because I am not a

housewife. I am an "at-home mother," and the difference between the two is vast.

Consider the etymology. When a woman described herself as a "housewife," she was defining herself primarily through her relationship to her house and her husband. That children came along with the deal was simply assumed, the way that airing rooms and occasionally cooking for invalids came along with the deal. When a housewife subjected herself and her work to a bit of brutally honest examination, she may have begun by assessing how well she was doing with the children, but she may just as well have begun by contemplating the nature and quality of her housework. If it had been suggested to her that she spend the long, delicate hours between three and six o'clock squiring her children to the array of enhancing activities pursued by the modern child, she would have laughed. Who would stay home to get dinner on? More to the point, why had she chosen a house so close to a playground if the children weren't going to get out of her hair and play in it? The kind of childhood that many of us remember so fondly—with hours of free time, and gangs of neighborhood kids meeting up after school—was possible partly because each block contained houses in which women were busy but close by, all too willing to push open a window and yell at the neighbor boy to get his fool bike out of the street.

But an at-home mother feels little obligation to the house itself; in fact, she is keenly aware that the house can be a vehicle of oppression. She is "at home" only because that is where her children happen to be. She does not define herself through her housekeeping; if she is in any way solvent (and many at-home mothers are), she has, at the very least, a once-a-month cleaning woman to do the most onerous tasks. (That some of the most significant achievements of the women's movement—specifically liberation from housework and child care—have been bought at the expense of poor women, often of poor brown-skinned women, is a bitter irony that very few feminists will discuss directly, other than to murmur something vague about "universal day care" and then, on reflex, blame the Republicans.) The at-home

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mother defines herself by her relationship to her children. She is making sacrifices on their behalf, giving up a career to give them something only she can. Her No. 1 complaint concerns the issue of respect: She demands it! Can't get enough of it! She isn't like a fifties housewife: ironing curtains, shampooing the carpets, stuck. She knows all about those women. She has seen *Pleasantville* and watched *Leave It to Beaver*; she's made more June Cleaver jokes than she can count. (In fact, June Cleaver—a character on a television show that went off the air in 1963—looms over her to a surprising extent, a sickening, terrifying specter: *Is that how people think I spend my time?*) If she has seen Todd Haynes's sumptuously beautiful recent movie, *Far From Heaven*, she understands and agrees wholeheartedly with the film's implication: that being a moneyed white housewife—with full-time help—in pre-Betty Friedan Hartford, Connecticut, was just as oppressive and soul-withering as being a black man in pre-civil rights Hartford. The at-home mother's attitude toward housewives of the fifties and sixties is a mixture of pity, outrage on their behalf, and gently mocking humor. (I recently received a birthday card that featured a perfectly coiffed fifties housewife standing in a gleaming kitchen. “The smart woman knows her way around the kitchen,” the front of the card said. Inside: “Around the kitchen, out the back door, and to a decent restaurant.”)

The at-home mother has a lot on her mind; to a significant extent she has herself on her mind. She must not allow herself to shrivel up with boredom. She must do things *for herself*. She must get to the gym, the spa, the yoga studio. To the book group. (She wouldn't be caught dead setting up tables and filling nut cups for a bridge party—June Cleaver! June Cleaver!—but a book group, which blends an agreeable seriousness of purpose with the kind of busy chitchat that women the world over adore, is irresistible.) She must go to lunch with like-minded friends, and to the movies. She needs to feed herself intellectually and emotionally; she needs to be on guard against exhaustion. She must find a way to combine the traditional women's work of childrearing

with the kind of shared housework arrangements and domestic liberation that working mothers enjoy. Most important, she must somehow draw a line in the sand between the valuable, important work she is doing and the pathetic imprisonment, the *Doll's House* existence, of the housewife of old. It's a tall order.

In a recent *Los Angeles Times* article the Hollywood producer Lynda Obst decries the tendency of upper-level female studio executives to quit their jobs once they become mothers; she implores, "Doesn't anyone remember how painfully poignant it was to grow up with a brilliant mother stuck in the suburbs with nothing to do?" This, of course, is the politically correct attitude about such women. The general idea, implied in countless nitwit books and articles and in a variety of popular movies, is that shortly after President Truman dropped the big one on Nagasaki, an entire generation of brave, brilliant women—many of them enjoying the deep satisfaction of doing shift work in munitions factories (the extent to which the riveters' lot is glorified by professional-class feminists who never set foot on a factory floor is shameful)—was kidnapped by a bunch of rat-bastard men, deposited in Levittown, and told to mop. That women in large numbers were eagerly, joyfully complicit in this life plan, that women helped to create the plan, is rarely considered. To be a young woman during the war years was to know that many of the boys from your high school class were overseas and, perhaps, that several of them had died there. It was to have a steady, often unspoken fear that a future including children and a husband and a household—women used to be unconflicted and unashamed about wanting these things—might not be in the cards. For it all to change on a dime—for the men to come home in vast, apparently unscathed numbers, and for there to be the GI Bill and GI mortgages and plenty of good jobs for returning servicemen (remember, these were women who had experienced childhoods in which there were not enough jobs, in which it was highly possible for a family to be ruined)—must have been a relief beyond

measure. That women, en masse, reconsidered their plan in fairly short order—*The Feminine Mystique* was published within twenty years of VJ Day—also gets scant mention. The postwar housewife era, whether one views it with horror or nostalgia, was short-lived.

Hollywood has a curious double obsession these days: lionizing the World War II serviceman and demonizing the fifties husband; what the brain trust fails to grasp is that he is the same man. The central heartbreaker of *Saving Private Ryan* is that Tom Hanks never makes it home to his adored wife; but if he'd gotten back to Pennsylvania in one piece, he would have been just another pot-roast-demanding, afternoon-newspaper-reading monster like Ward Cleaver (who was an engineer with the Seabees before dragging poor June off to his lair). Husbands lurk menacingly in the backgrounds of so many contemporary works set during the housewife period, emanating a threatening maleness (just the ticket at Normandy, but oh well), tramping their dirty feet across freshly scrubbed linoleum, demanding sex and clean laundry and subservience. In Michael Cunningham's spare and excellent novel *The Hours*, Laura Brown, a postwar California housewife so stultified by her lot that she ends up going cuckoo, kissing a neighbor lady, and eventually abandoning her children, must endure a day in which the responsibilities to her war-hero husband include not only the hellish complexity of baking a cake from scratch but also marital relations, an activity that forces her to make the ultimate sacrifice: putting a bookmark in *Mrs. Dalloway*. "There will be no reading tonight," the narrator informs us ominously. (Was Laura too oppressed to switch on the bedside lamp after the brute had been satisfied? Apparently so.)

Most curious about all of these representations is that they run so completely counter to my experience of housewives. I was raised by a housewife; my friends' mothers were housewives. Many of them, in retrospect, seemed mildly depressed; perhaps fulltime employment would have alleviated that depression quickly and completely (al-



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though the number of working mothers I know who are at sheer wits' end makes me question that central assumption of the women's movement). But what I remember most clearly about those housewives is not their ennui but, rather, their competence. They never served takeout for dinner; they cooked dinner—a protein, a starch, two vegetables, and dessert. They knew how to iron and mend and how to cope with the endless series of domestic crises that unseat me on a daily basis: the unraveled sweater sleeve, the chocolate stain on the tiny button-down shirt, the expensive set of sheets with the torn hem, the child who turns up with a raging fever two minutes before the Christmas pageant, the husband who announces that he'd like to invite someone from work to dinner that night. I would like to be the kind of woman who can cope—easily, effortlessly, while gabbing away about something else altogether—with all those things; I'm not. I'm an at-home mother, far too educated and uppity to have knuckled down and learned anything about stain removal or knitting or stretching recipes. My mother tried to teach me, and God knows I was a rapt student (like most adult obsessions, mine has its roots in childhood experience), but my attention kept attaching itself to the least important part of the lesson. "Now I'm ironing the placket," she would say, and I would stand beside her, thinking, "*Placket.*" Good word. Perhaps I didn't have a great enough sense of urgency. I knew there were college and perhaps graduate school to contend with before I'd need to know how to line a baking sheet with rice paper. And as it turned out, by the time I had a household of my own, the world had changed. I have been married a total of fourteen years to a total of two men, and never once have I been asked to iron a single item of either man's clothing or to replace even one popped button, for which I suppose I have the women's movement to thank. But I realize now, late in the game, that we'd be much better off if I had a few of those skills.

Housewives, however, were not concerned solely with housework. Once I asked my mother why she didn't go to

PTA meetings; she said, "That's for women who don't have anything better to do with their time." She was a housewife through and through, yet she had a sense of herself—highly accurate—as a purposefully busy woman. One reason that the women's movement took off in this country the way it did was that its organizers eventually realized that housewives were capable not only of weeping into their teacups and trying to name their unnameable problem but also of political action. In fact, they had a long history of political action. Consider the League of Women Voters, which during the period in question was mostly made up of non-employed, college-educated mothers married to professional men. These were women who cooked the family breakfast and sent the children off to school with packed lunch boxes, and then vacuumed their lovely living rooms and used them to host not book groups but, rather, meetings on civil-rights initiatives and opposition to the Vietnam War. These meetings tended to be somewhat proper and highly ladylike. They were run by women who had learned the finer points of parliamentary procedure in their college sororities; they were attended by women who had a firm belief in the civilizing power of combed hair and fresh lipstick and not talking out of turn. These were women, one might argue, badly in need of a consciousness-raising session. But if a truly raised consciousness includes an awareness of the injustice done to others and a willingness to try to stop it, then these women were at least halfway there.

Housewives were the people who put Trick or Treat for UNICEF boxes in millions of small hands. They were, of course, thrifty (thrift is the signal virtue of the housewife), but many of them were also high-minded, convinced that people ought to help one another out. George Harrison may have held a Concert for Bangladesh, but it was the mothers on my block who sat down and wrote little checks—ten dollars, fifteen dollars—to CARE. Many housewives shared a belief in the power of boycotts, which could so easily be conducted while grocery shopping. I remember hearing my mother's half of a long,

complicated telephone discussion about whether it would or would not undermine the housewives' beef strike of 1973 if the caller defrosted and cooked meat bought prior to the strike. Tucked into the aforementioned copy of *The Settlement Cook Book*, along with handwritten recipes for Chocolate Diamonds and Oma's German Cheesecake, is a small card that reads FREEDOM AND JUSTICE FOR J.P. STEVENS WORKERS. The organizers of that long-ago boycott understood two things: first, that if you were going to cripple a supplier of household goods (J. P. Stevens manufactured table linens and hosiery and blankets), you had to enlist housewives; and second, that you stood a better chance of catching their attention if you printed your slogan on the reverse of a card that contained a table of common metric equivalents, a handy, useful reminder that 1 liter = 1 quart and also that the makers of Finesse hosiery exploited their workers.

The success of the women's movement depended on imposing a certain narrative—of boredom, of oppression, of despairing uselessness—on an entire generation of women, a narrative that has only gained strength as the years have passed, leaving people with a skewed and rather offensive view of those women. Consider the case of the most famous housewife of the era: Erma Bombeck. To think about her life in any depth is to realize that even the most "typical" housewife of them all—*Erma Bombeck*—led a life of infinitely greater complexity, worth, and dignity than any of the modern mythologizers, with their subdued and shrinking heroines, could imagine.

Like many housewives of her day, Bombeck had a rough Depression childhood, in Dayton, Ohio. Her father was a crane operator who died suddenly when she was nine; her mother—who had left school after sixth grade, married at fourteen, and given birth to her only child at sixteen—lost their house and their furniture. Together they moved into a front bedroom in her grandparents' house, and Erma Senior got a factory job. "One day you were a family," Bombeck recalled, "living in a little house

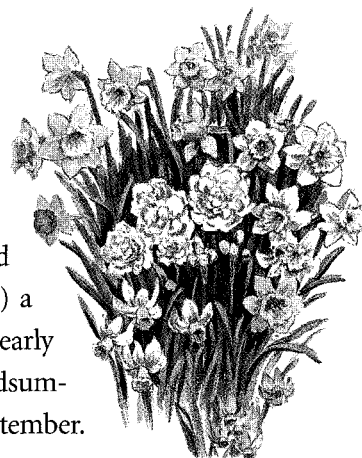
at the bottom of a hill. The next day it was all gone." Erma Senior, a frustrated stage mother, sent her daughter to tap-dancing lessons, and pushed her into contests and radio appearances (the tap-dancing craze of the thirties was so powerful that a few minutes of frantic dancing by a girl Shirley Temple's age was the stuff even of a successful radio spot). But young Erma's inclinations ran in a different direction. She was clever and bookish; she loved James Thurber and Robert Benchley and H. Allen Smith. When Erma was fourteen, the famous newspaper correspondent Dorothy Thompson came to Dayton, and Erma—even though she was coming down with measles—persuaded her mother to let her attend Thompson's lecture ("I infected the entire hall that night," she remembered). For Christmas she asked for and received an expensive book by Thompson. Not surprisingly, given the times and her station in life, she attended a vocational high school, which required students to spend two weeks a month pursuing a "commercial alternate." She must not have been particularly interested in the kind of department-store and telephone-company jobs usually recommended for girls, because in a burst of chutzpah and innocence she wangled an interview with the managing editor of the *Dayton Journal-Herald*. She impressed him (one doesn't like to trade in clichés, but it's impossible to imagine the scene without the word "spunk" coming into play), but he said he had only one job opening, and it was a full-time position. On the spot she talked him into hiring a friend for the other two weeks a month, and so—at age fifteen, and with the title "copy girl" (hardly sexist, considering its opposite)—she began her newspaper career.

Let us pause for a moment to consider how the story already diverges from the standard cant. Apparently it was possible, long before Rosie tied on her kerchief and flexed her fetching bicep, for a woman to get factory work when she needed to support her family. It was also possible for a young girl to nurture dreams of a professional career, and for her to find—decades before Take Our Daughters to Work Day—a female role model already pursuing

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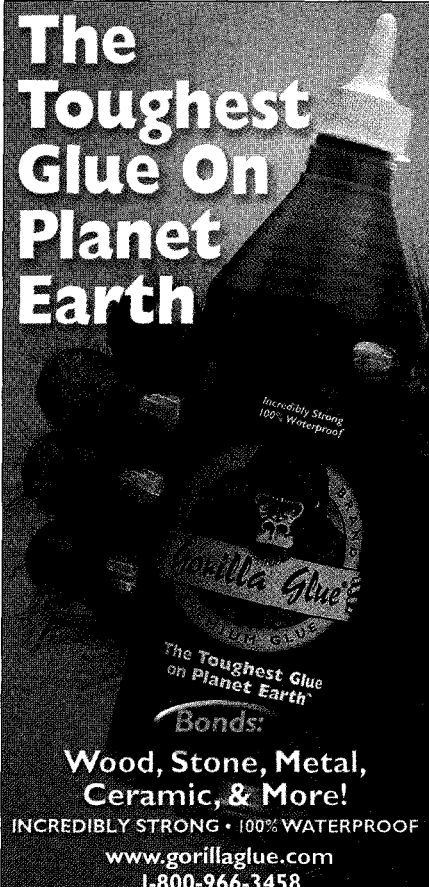
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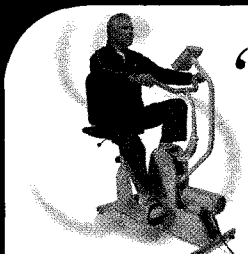
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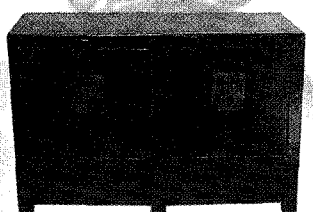
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that work. It was possible for a bright, quick-thinking girl to storm as emphatically male an environment as a city newspaper and to create the exact kind of job-sharing arrangement that contemporary working mothers think they invented. Most important, it was possible in those days for a girl to overcome a considerable amount of adversity—poverty, and the early loss of a father, and a tight net of employment law clearly intended to favor men—to make something of herself.

It was also possible to do all these things and still dream of children and of staying home to raise them. Erma had met a young reporter, Bill Bombeck, and after he returned from the service, in 1948, they married. Erma by then had a college degree and had been promoted at the *Journal-Herald*, from part-time to full-time copy girl and then to full-fledged newspaperwoman. She became friends with the reporter Phyllis Battelle, who remembered "a bouncy kid in bobbysocks, knife-pleated skirts and baggy sweaters." But what Erma really wanted was children: "Putting on panty hose every morning is just not whoopee time. My dream was to putter around the house, learn how to snap beans, put up curtains and bake bread." Finally—through the adoption of the Bombecks' first child, their purchase of a house in a subdivision outside Dayton, and Erma's resignation from the newspaper—those dreams came true. And she began to go absolutely bonkers.

In her best book, the memoir *A Marriage Made in Heaven ... Or Too Tired for an Affair* (1993), she reports that the women of the suburbs were all "bored out of their skulls." In driveways and supermarket parking lots they "commiserated among ourselves as to what we had gotten ourselves into." What she needed, she soon realized—without benefit of *Working Mother* magazine or even a single book about achieving "work/life balance"—was a job. And with no fuss or fanfare (much the way my own mother did, when she realized she couldn't spend another afternoon washing the kitchen walls and climbed off the stepladder to take a curious look at the Help Wanted: Female section of the *San Francisco Chronicle*)

she got one: editing the local shopping circular. In 1964, not long after her youngest child boarded the school bus bound for kindergarten, she combed her hair, braced herself, and asked the editor of her community's weekly newspaper for a job as a housewife columnist. Success came quickly, and it never left. She was soon back at the *Journal-Herald*, where, within three weeks of her return, her columns were syndicated nationally. A sensation.

The idea of a housewife confessional was not new. Jean Kerr had achieved extraordinary success with *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* (1957) almost a decade before Bombeck began writing her columns. Shirley Jackson trod similar ground in *Raising Demons* (1957), a book whose jacket cover—happy children surrounding a pull-toy ducky—is as far from the spirit of "The Lottery" as it is possible to get. Jackson was also the author of *Special Delivery* (1960), the title page of which describes it as "A useful book for brand-new mothers in which Shirley Jackson as chief resident provides a sane and sage approach to the hilarious and homey situations which accompany the advent of motherhood." And any serious study of housewife writers must include Peg Bracken, who wrote her best-known books during the early sixties, when the women's movement was still a sleeping giantess; her attitude toward the housewife's lot, however, is not unconflicted: the titles of her two most famous books are *The I Hate to Cook Book* (1960) and *The I Hate to Housekeep Book* (1962). Her writing reveals her to be a cheerful sort, possessed of a winsome prose style; she is, she confesses, "but destiny's plaything" and her approach to housewifery combines whimsy and practicality (the accompanying Hilary Knight illustrations capture the spirit of the text with a precision not seen since the great days of the nineteenth-century illustrated novel). Her jolliness may well have had something to do with the fact that she clearly liked her hooch: *The I Hate to Cook Book* was written, she tells us, "for those of us who want to fold our big dishwater hands around a dry Martini instead of a wet flounder, come the end

Immigration: The Driving Force Behind Our U.S. Population Growth

We at Negative Population Growth, Inc. (NPG) believe that our country is already vastly overpopulated in terms of the long range carrying capacity of its resources and environment.

We believe, therefore, that U.S. population growth should be halted as soon as possible, and eventually reversed.

But, unless our present massive immigration is drastically reduced, we will never be able to stabilize our population at a sustainable level.

In the decade of the 90s U.S. population grew by an unprecedented 33 million. Immigration, during that decade, accounted for about 60% of that huge increase in our numbers. Projections are that we will grow by at least as much in the current decade. If that happens our population, in the short space of only 20 years, will have increased by a staggering 66 million.

If we allow current rates of fertility and immigration to continue, our U.S. population, now over 288 million, is projected to pass 400 million by 2050, with no end to growth in sight! Such growth would be catastrophic for our environment, for our standard of living, and for the quality of our lives.

We now allow more than 1,000,000 legal immigrants to come here annually. Their numbers are swelled by over 400,000 illegal immigrants who come here each year and remain permanently, adding their numbers to the estimated nine million illegal aliens who are already living here permanently in violation of our laws.

We urgently need to halt **illegal** immigration and reduce annual **legal** immigration to not more than 100,000 a year, including all relatives and refugees. Then, immigration would no longer contribute significantly to our population growth.

Advocates of Massive Immigration Are Wrong!

There are powerful forces that fight not only to keep immigration at the present high level, but to increase it. Among them are employers who want low-wage labor, ethnic groups whose leaders seek greater political power, and some humanitarians who believe in virtually open borders.

They also include pro-growth advocates who believe that an ever-growing labor force, fueled by immigration, is necessary to achieve their goal of an ever-increasing GNP. That goal, in the real world of environmental and resource limits, is a recipe for disaster.

How Can We Best Help Others?

Beyond any question, the United States should maintain the humane policies toward immigrants and refugees that have characterized its past.

But we need to express our compassion in an intelligent way. Our priority should be to improve living conditions in the developing countries, rather than to allow vast numbers of their citizens to settle here.

World population is growing by some 90 million a year, and almost all of that growth occurs in the developing countries. We cannot possibly allow more than a tiny fraction of those millions to come here. What can we do to help all those who have no choice but to remain at home?

One thing is crystal clear. The problems of the underdeveloped countries are beyond solution by emigration. To pretend otherwise is simply self-delusion.

Nothing can permanently improve living conditions in these countries unless they first halt their population growth, the root cause of their poverty and environmental degradation.

Those who assert that eradicating poverty is a prerequisite for halting population growth have the process just backwards. Only after halting their population growth can developing countries even begin to bring their standard of living up to an adequate level.

We should do everything in our power to help those nations that are prepared to make a determined effort to halt, and eventually to reverse, their population growth.

We Need A Sensible U.S. Immigration Policy

We cannot continue to allow our national immigration policy to be dictated by special interest groups who pursue their own agendas without regard for the broad national interest.

Our immigration policy should be an integral part of a national population policy aimed at halting, and then reversing, our population growth, so that U.S. population can eventually be stabilized at a lower, more sustainable level.

As Americans, our first obligation, to ourselves and to our children and grandchildren, is to restore and preserve the land we have inherited. In shaping our immigration policy, our top priority must be our own national interest, and the welfare of present and future generations of Americans.

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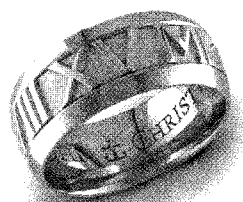
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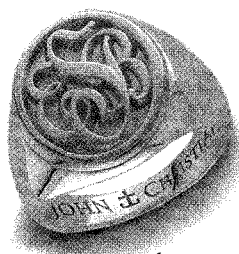
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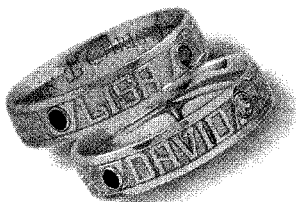
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of a long day"; powdered milk, she once observed, is preferable to the real McCoy not only because it is cheaper but also because it can be a component of "a good frothy punch," one consisting of "milk, egg, sugar, whisky, beaten with an electric mixer." Bracken's feelings about her domestic work take the form of good-hearted acquiescence, although some of her books' most off-hand humor reveals the edge of genuine despair: the recipe for Skid Row Stroganoff includes the instruction "Add the flour, salt, paprika, and mushrooms, stir, and let it cook five minutes while you light a cigarette and stare sullenly at the sink." (One hesitates to wander into the minefield of literary biography, but I find it impossible to read *The I Hate to Cook Book* without dwelling on the fact that while Bracken was writing it her husband told her it was the stupidest idea for a book he'd ever heard of; they divorced four years later.) Although her collected works are slightly less explicitly political than those of Beatrix Potter, anyone taking the historical long view can easily discover within them the seeds of the revolution that would soon be upon this country. How else to account for the fact that a book on house-keeping contains a chapter on coping with depression? "Every girl owes it to herself to hang onto her mind as long as she can," we learn in that chapter, which is called "How to Be Happy When You're Miserable." "If the fulfillment of your own purposes seems to be flickering," she writes, one ought to remember that many high achievers—Daumier, say, or Ogilby, who translated Homer and Virgil—got a late start. Women frustrated by the demands of motherhood ought to remember that "there is world enough and time," a bit of counsel as useful to the full-time mothers of today as to those of forty years ago. In fact, I found several bits of sound advice in *The I Hate to Housekeep Book*, among them "Each time you give the house a good going-over, start with a different room" and "Act immediately on whatever housewifely impulses come your way" (and, if I might add my own two cents on matters domestic: if you substitute the word "sexual" for the word "housewifely," you also end up with the

best approach to conjugal relations I have hit upon thus far).

What is refreshing about the housewife writers is their candor about the tedium of raising children; although the at-home mother must think of the work as exalted (otherwise why isn't she back at the law firm, bringing home the big bucks?), housewives were willing to admit that the enterprise was often an emotional bust. And no one was more willing than Erma Bombeck, who—to be at once current and crass—"branded" the form. Why she was the one to have such out-of-the-park success with the subject has less to do with her prose than with the sheer force of her personality, her eye for the precise and homey detail, and her matchless way with a gag. I had expected to reread her work with a gentle, reminiscing smile, and was amazed by how often I found myself laughing. I do not want, however, to misrepresent her writing; she was, to a certain extent, a hack. How could she not have been? To write that frequently (she had written well in excess of 4,000 columns when she died, in 1996), on such tight deadlines and with such a tightly circumscribed length, is almost by definition to rely on formulas, to repeat oneself, to tread a few good one-liners almost to death. Even a true-blue fan will be shocked by Bombeck's almost shameless willingness to trot out the same jokes and observations over and over again. Certainly, her work achieved maximal effect in its original context: meted out regularly but sparingly, in 700-word doses on the women's page—snappy, chin-up reminders that everyone hates doing the laundry, and that even the most adored children can run you ragged with frustration and boredom. In those days no matter where you lived or what your local newspaper was, the women's page was firmly in the hands of a group of stalwart midwesterners. I grew up in Berkeley, where the front page often informed me of unsettling events close to home, of riots on Telegraph Avenue and of the Black Panthers (Huey Newton was once an honored guest speaker at a public school I attended) and, later, the Symbionese Liberation Army. But the back of the newspaper—a respite—

gave me Erma and also the Iowans Abby and Ann, and the Minnesotan Charles Schulz. (Bil Keane, the creator of *Family Circus*, was from the East, but he and Erma became neighbors and great pals.) They all seemed connected to the fabric of an America that I didn't live in but believed in passionately, a place in which "student unrest" was rarely mentioned, in which the central elements of the national consciousness weren't up for complete reassessment and rejection, in which most of life's difficulties could be handled with a combination of good humor and endurance, and in which graver matters were quickly dispatched by scheduling an appointment with one's "pastor or clergyman."

Read collectively, Bombeck's pieces offer a startlingly precise chronicle of her time. Anyone in search of a good topic for a women's-studies dissertation would do well to take a look at Bombeck's columns; it would be difficult to find a more comprehensive overview of the way middle-class women lived their lives—and of the way their lives changed—during the 1970s and 1980s. "Lady, you *are* the problem," a member of the women's liberation movement once wrote her. In fact she was not. She was a talented woman who had once dreamed of working for *The New York Times* and who ended up as one of the best-known figures in American journalism; she was a woman who combined work and motherhood as gracefully as it is possible to do, who championed working and at-home mothers with equal ardor, who campaigned tirelessly for the Equal Rights Amendment (her close friend Liz Carpenter, a press secretary for Lady Bird Johnson, recalls that the two were "the Thelma and Louise of the ERA").

There is no one my mother would less want to be compared to than Erma Bombeck, whose work—as far as I know—she never read. My mother was an accomplished hostess, a flirt, a reader. Her sensibilities were in no way midwestern. Yet in the two years since her death I have rarely remembered her more vividly—or missed her more keenly—than when I read all that Bombeck a few months back. In part this has to do with the simple household economies of the

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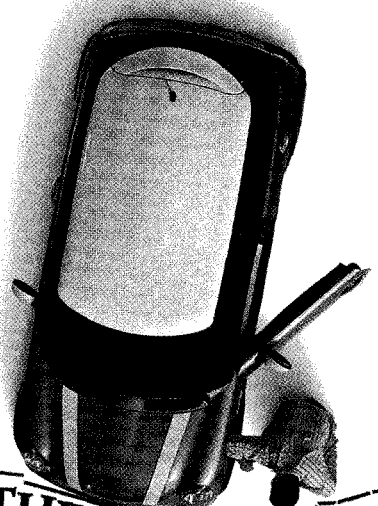
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time, which I had forgotten about but of which Bombeck was a faithful recorder. To read Bombeck is to find a constantly updated economic index of her day: the problem with a bathtub faucet left on the "shower" position is that it ruins an eight-dollar hairdo; the problem with a bored child's deciding to put lime wedges in glasses of soda pop is that limes cost \$1.49 a pound. I don't think I ever spent a day with my mother—even late in her life, when her fortunes had improved considerably—when she didn't mention the price of something. Like Bombeck, like a lot of housewives of her generation, she grew up poor in a hard time, which she never discussed but never forgot. Like Bombeck, she kept the household accounts, and she was careful about them. I grew up in the most solidly middle-class academic family you can imagine, but every couple of months my mother would borrow a bottle-capping contraption so that she could put up her own root beer—made from Hires elixir, absolutely delicious, and roundly complimented by my father for its pennies-a-glass economy. As for me, child of my time, I could not tell you the price of a single item in my refrigerator; all I know—from long, unpleasant precedent—is that much of it is going bad and headed for the trash can.

But what reminds me most of my mother is harder to pinpoint. It has to do with the way both women dealt with motherhood, which is for me an exquisitely overwrought enterprise, full of guilt-wracked, sleepless nights and over-worried-about children and the never-ending sense that I'm doing too little or too much or the wrong thing, or missing the crucial moments, or somehow warping these perfect creatures that my body—that witless dud—had sense enough to knit together but my heart and mind can't seem to figure out how to raise with my mother's unworried ease. Housewives didn't trot after their children the way I trot after mine—Junior All-Stars! Karate! Art for Tots! Their children trotted after them. I whiled a childhood away leaning on the counters of dry cleaners and shoe repairmen, and I was happy to do it. I liked being with my mother. To me, she

never seemed diminished or unimportant because of those endless domestic errands; on the contrary, the work she did was wholly connected to the life we were living. The notes my father took on the flyleaf of *Howards End* apparently got translated into words spoken in a lecture hall I could hardly imagine; but the steak my mother spent five minutes choosing showed up on my plate that night.

If you asked any of the mothers in my I set how motherhood has changed us, we would tell you—in one way or another—that it has introduced into our lives an almost unbearably powerful form of love and also a ceaseless, grinding anxiety, one that often propels us to absurd activities. (I know a working mother who FedExed breast milk home from a business trip; I recently hosted a birthday party for thirty-two children because I couldn't arrive at any sensible way to compose a guest list.) For many of us this transformation has included a helpless sense of repeated failures, both large and small. For the women of an earlier generation, however, motherhood brought a clear and compelling awareness of human vulnerability, and a sense of having somehow been charged with the care of others. I can remember my mother faithfully cutting the wrappers off cans of dog food because if she sent in enough of them, the manufacturer would make a contribution to Guide Dogs for the Blind; I myself have compassion fatigue, and have limited my "charitable giving" to a certain few circumscribed causes. At the back of Erma Bombeck's last book, published after her death from complications following a kidney transplant, is an organ-donor card that the reader can fill out, along with information on the Erma Bombeck Organ Donor Awareness Project. I keep meaning to fill that card out; my mother would have done it in an instant, without thinking twice about it. But I've been busy—I'm a busy woman; my children are two-sport athletes at age five—and I haven't gotten around to it yet. **A**

Caitlin Flanagan is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*. She is at work on a book about modern motherhood.

BOOKS

"LOOSIE!"

*The rise and fall of
a great collaboration*

BY MONA SIMPSON

.....

There are few great female comedians, for the simple reason that women like to look pretty. Comedy requires the performer to abandon most notions of refinement and sometimes to take a pie in the face. Lucille Ball was without question one of the century's great clowns, and she still appears in nightly reruns of *I Love Lucy*, her mouth half stuffed with candy in one episode, her lips puckered and goofy (after she's taken a spin in the starch vat at the Speedy Laundry) in another.

Lucy had many mentors. In his later, alcoholic years, Buster Keaton championed her. At RKO, Ginger Rogers's mother advised Lucy to have her teeth fixed, wear dresses instead of pants, and read English literature to improve her vocabulary, lending truth to the Hollywood cliché that behind every successful actress there's a hairdresser and a mother (the chief hairstylist at MGM turned her into a redhead). Yet there seems to be little doubt that she pushed herself to her most original stunts and expression in the context of her personal and creative collaboration with her husband, Desi Arnaz, whom she trusted completely. "She thought he was just brilliant," according to her cousin Cleo.

He was. He hired Karl Freund to use the then revolutionary multi-camera format before a live audience; he persuaded the sponsors to shoot the show on film stock rather than broadcast it from New York; he breezily got the two of them ownership rights in one negotiation, and in another he persuaded the reluctant advertisers to make Lucy's pregnancy part of the show. The 179 episodes of *I Love Lucy* represent the couple's greatest achievement. It's there that we can see the lopsided, Chaplinian grin and Lucy's repertoire of expressions of greed, fear, and surprise as Desi's accented voice calls, "Loosie!" and says, "You got some 'splainin' to do."

BALL OF FIRE

by Stefan Kanfer
Knopf

Originally *I Love Lucy* was going to be about a movie star married to a Cuban bandleader. But soon they realized, as Lucy explained, "The general public doesn't think that movie stars have any problems. They think it's just party after party." And so Lucy was defined as a housewife who wanted to get into show business. Although there was some jockeying for power between the two (Desi wanted top billing; at one point he whined, "Why don't we compromise and make it alphabetical?"), Desi recognized his wife's centrality and once said to



everyone on the set, when she tripped on a cable, "Amigos, anything happens to her, we're all in the shrimp business."

The story of their marriage is charming, moving, and ultimately tragic. Lucy was a dogged trier; she'd been trying to make it for years, first as a model and then as an actress, but she had never got past being "queen of the B-pluses," despite her willingness to do almost anything (including sleep with a married top studio executive). She endured sprained wrists, paralyzed eyeballs when a wayward wind machine propelled a cloud of talcum powder into her face, and bruises from several tons of avalanching coffee beans falling on her during a chase scene.

As Stefan Kanfer writes in *Ball of Fire*, she married Desi, who was six years younger, for love, and she wrangled him onto the show so that they could spend time together (their work often put them on opposite coasts) and try to start a

family. (She'd had several miscarriages, and one of them had made it into the papers. Fans of her radio show wrote 2,867 letters of consolation. She answered every one.)

Desi had the rare ability to find his wife beautiful while encouraging the full extent of her comic talent—which required her to risk humiliation and exposure. (And then, as now, comedy doesn't get the respect that drama does: Lucy felt that Katharine Hepburn, the epitome of "class" in too many senses of the word, snubbed her. "Oh, they don't

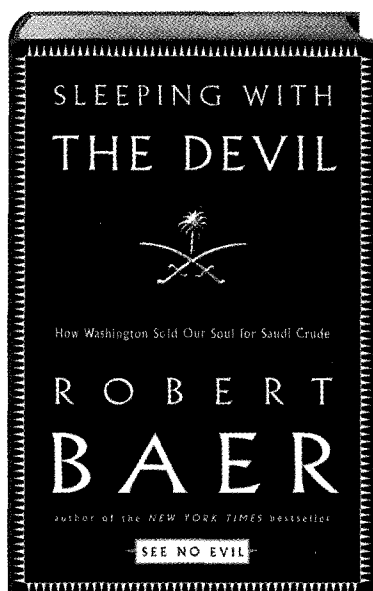
want to have anything to do with me," Lucy complained.)

So much of what worked was their intimate banter and their outright use of their lives onscreen. They scheduled the cesarean birth of Desi Arnaz Jr. for the night "Lucy Goes to the Hospital" aired, and Desi Jr. reportedly found it confusing to grow up watching his parents and "Little Ricky" on the air. In one episode Lucy Ricardo looks at a picture of herself and Ricky as a young couple and asks what became of them. "Haven't you heard?" Ricky answers. "They lived happily ever after."

Lucy took great chances, wanted many of the things we all want, and got everything she'd wanted and then some, all at once and late. She was in her forties by the time they got their TV show on the air, had their two children, and became rich and famous. (The couple was so popular that Marshall Field's changed its open-late night from Monday to Thursday, hang-

From the author of
The New York Times bestseller
See No Evil

"Saudi Arabia is no abstraction. It's a powder keg waiting to explode. When that happens, it could carry me, you, our savings and security away with it..."



...The house of Sa'ud knows what the West is only beginning to learn: Worse horrors are out there waiting, worse than Usama bin Laden. We have to face up to a kingdom at war with itself."

—Robert Baer, 20-year veteran of the CIA's Directorate of Operations

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ing a sign that said WE LOVE LUCY TOO.)

The central question, of course, is why it all went so bad, and Kanfer is better on the screwball comedy of the marriage than on its sad end (after nineteen years). I've never been overfond of biographies or memoirs of the more stringently truthful kind, but that's only to say I find life repetitive, indirect, and obscure. Kanfer chronicles the divorce, laboriously tells us about Lucy's repeated efforts to work on her own, but never really elucidates the losses of their later lives. In fact, the late photos of them say more than does the last third of the book. Do all great collaborations eventually fall apart?

To answer that for this particular collaboration, we'd have to understand the failure of the marriage, and perhaps

that's a job for Tolstoy more than for any biographer. We learn that in 1956, after the producer and head writer, Jess Oppenheimer, left the show, Desi told Lucy, "We have two alternatives. Now that we have two wonderful children, after waiting all these years, it'd be a shame not to be able to spend more time with them, enjoy watching them grow. Desi will be two and a half and Lucie four this summer. We could teach them to fish, ride a horse, and I could take all of you to Cuba to meet your thousands of relatives. What do you think?" Lucy answered, "You said we have two alternatives. What is the other one? ... How do you quit a number-one show?"

It's impossible not to wish that Lucy hadn't taken just that one more risk. **A**

Mona Simpson is a novelist.

BOOKS

ENCORE

Charles Baxter's new novel brings back some old friends

BY JAMES MARCUS

.....

The stars of Charles Baxter's new novel, a wandering Jew and an infinitely adaptable Protestant, first appeared nearly twenty years ago, in the short story "Saul and Patsy Are Getting Comfortable in Michigan." Now the author has called back the couple for an encore, with marvelous results. As before, much of

Like its predecessor, *The Feast of Love*, Baxter's latest creation seems to be several different novels in one. There is a dry-eyed study of domestic life, which suggests that marriage is made neither in heaven nor in hell but in a kind of conjugal limbo, leaving it alternately ecstatic and unbearable. There is a

the comedic energy issues from Saul's end: this history teacher and "virtuoso of fretfulness" feels himself shipwrecked in the plainspoken,

SAUL AND PATSY
by Charles Baxter
Pantheon

valentine to the Midwest, whose terrain the author describes with almost luminarist ardor. A teenage girl takes a turn at the narrative

poker-faced Midwest. The décor at a neighbor's house "felt like a museum of earlier American feelings," he thinks. "Not a single ironic sentence had ever been spoken here. Everything in the room was sincere, everything except himself." Yet even a paragon of self-consciousness like Saul has his Achilles' heel. His love for Patsy, who truly *has* gotten comfortable in Michigan, brings him at least intermittently out of his shell. And when one of his students begins an anti-Semitic stalking campaign, Saul is stumped. His skeptical riffing, usually such an irresistible force, has finally met an immovable object.

helm, as do Saul's mother and his younger, obnoxious brother. From time to time, in fact, *Saul and Patsy* feels like too much of a portmanteau production, with multiple stories clamoring to be top dog. Yet Baxter's prose—trenchant, funny, and apt to turn on a metaphysical dime—remains one of the pure pleasures of American fiction, and he deserves a wide readership for this book, whose vision of embattled heartland Judaism might just as easily have been called *Oy, Wilderness!* **A**

James Marcus is the author of Amazonia, a memoir of the Internet boom and bust, to be published next year.

WHERE THE TWAIN SHOULD HAVE MET

The cosmopolitan Edward Said was ideally placed to explain East to West and West to East. What went wrong?

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

I first met Edward Said in the summer of 1976, in the capital city of Cyprus. We had come to Nicosia to take part in a conference on the rights of small nations. The obscene civil war in Lebanon was just beginning to consume the whole society and to destroy the cosmopolitanism of Beirut; it was still just possible in those days to imagine that a right "side" could be discerned through the smoke of confessional conflagration. Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation was in its infancy (as was the messianic "settler" movement among Jews), and the occupation itself was less than a decade old. Egypt was still the Egypt of Anwar Sadat—a man who had placed most of his credit on the wager of "Westernization," however commercially conceived, and who was only two years away from the Camp David accords. It was becoming dimly apprehended in the West that the old narrative of "Israel" versus "the Arabs" was much too crude. The image of a frugal kibbutz state surrounded by a heaving ocean of ravening mullahs and demagogues was slowly yielding to a story of two peoples contesting a right to the same twice-promised land.

For all these "conjunctures," as we now tend to term them, Said was almost perfectly configured. He had come from an Anglican Palestinian family that divided its time and its property between Jerusalem and Cairo. He had spent years in the internationalist atmosphere of Beirut, and was as much at home in French and English as in Arabic. A favorite of Lionel Trilling's, he had won high distinction at Columbia University and was also up to concert standard as a pianist. Those Americans who subliminally associated the word "Palestinian" with swarthinness, bizarre headgear, and strange irredentist rhetoric were in for a shock that was long overdue. And this is to say little enough about his wit, his cu-

riosity, his care for the opinions of others.

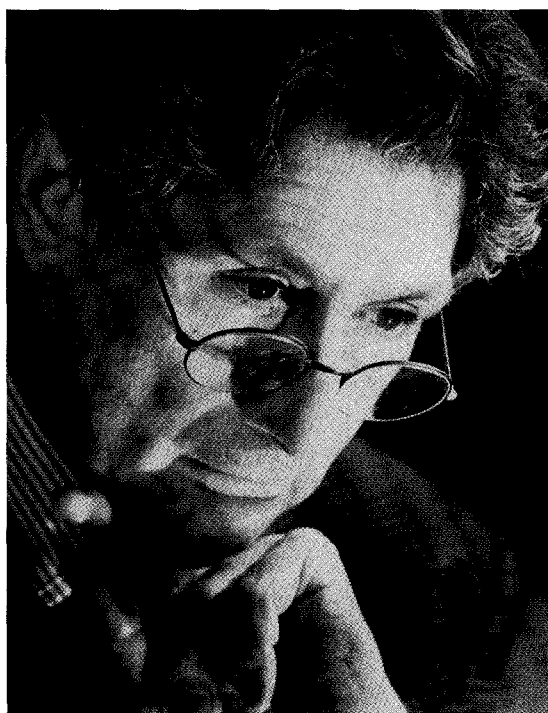
Within two years he had published *Orientalism*: a book that has exerted a galvanizing influence throughout the quarter century separating its first from its most recent edition. In these pages Said characterized Western scholarship

ORIENTALISM

by Edward Said

Vintage Books

about the East as a conscious handmaiden of power and subordination. Explorers, missionaries, archaeologists, linguists—all had been part of a colonial enterprise. To the extent that American academics now speak about the "appropriation" of other cultures, and seldom fail to put ordinary words such as "the Other" between por-



tentious quotation marks, and contest the very notion of objective inquiry, they are paying what they imagine is a debt to Edward Said's work. It isn't unfair to the book, I hope, to say that it also received a tremendous charge from the near simultaneous revolution in Iran and the later assassination of Anwar Sadat. The alleged "Westernization" or "mod-

ernization" of two ancient civilizations, Persia and Egypt, had proved to be founded upon, well ... sand. The word of the traditional policy intellectuals and Middle East "experts" turned out to be worth less than naught. Although this book said little on the subject of either Iran or Sadat, it burst on the knowledge-seeking general reader even as it threw down a challenge to the think tanks and professional institutes.

To be appraised properly, *Orientalism* ought to be read alongside three other books by Said: *Covering Islam* (1981), *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), and *Out of Place* (1999). The last of these is a memoir, which was the target of a number of scurrilous attacks essentially aimed at denying Said the right to call himself a Palestinian at all. The first is an assault on the generally lazy press coverage of the Iranian revolution and of all matters concerned with Islam. *Culture and Imperialism* is a collection of essays showing that Said has a deep understanding, amounting at times to sympathy, for the work of writers such as Austen and Kipling and George Eliot, who—outward appearances notwithstanding—never did take "the Orient" for granted.

In scrutinizing instances of translation and interpretation, the inescapable question remains the same: Who is interpreting what and to whom? It is easy enough to say that Westerners had long been provided with an exotic, sumptuous, but largely misleading account of the Orient, whether supplied by Benjamin Disraeli's Suez Canal share purchases, the celluloid phantasms of Rudolph Valentino, or the torrid episodes in T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. But it is also true that Arab, Indian, Malay, and Iranian societies can operate on a false if not indeed deluded view of "the West." This much became vividly evident very recently, with the circulation of bizarre libels about (say) a Jewish plot to destroy the World Trade Center. I, for one,

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do not speak or read Arabic, and have made only five, relatively short, visits to Iraq. But I am willing to bet that I know more about Mesopotamia than Saddam Hussein ever knew about England, France, or the United States. I also think that such knowledge as I have comes from more disinterested sources ... And I would add that Saddam Hussein was better able to force himself on my attention than I ever was to force myself on his. As Adonis, the great Syrian-Lebanese poet, has warned us, there exists a danger in too strong a counterposition between "East" and "West." The "West" has its intellectual and social troughs, just as the "East" has its pinnacles. Not only is this true now (Silicon Valley could hardly run without

this it would be idle to dispute. Lord Macaulay, for example, was a near perfect illustration of the sentence (which occurs in Disraeli's novel *Tancred*) "The East is a career." He viewed the region both as a barbarous source of potential riches and as a huge tract in pressing need of civilization. But in that latter respect he rather echoed the feeling of his fellow Victorian Karl Marx, who thought that the British had brought modernity to India in the form of printing presses, railways, the telegraph, and steamship contact with other cultures. Marx didn't believe that they had done this out of the kindness of their hearts. "England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan was actuated only by the vilest interests," he wrote, "... but that is

In Said's analysis every instance of European curiosity about the East was part of a grand design to exploit and remake what Westerners saw as a passive, rich, but ultimately contemptible "Oriental" sphere.

the work of highly skilled Indians, for example), but it was true when Arab scholars in Baghdad and Córdoba recovered the lost work of Aristotle for medieval "Christendom."

Cultural-political interaction, then, must be construed as dialectical. Edward Said was in a prime position to be a "negotiator" here. In retrospect, however, it can be argued that he chose a one-sided approach and employed rather a broad brush: "Without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period." ("Produce," as in "cultural production," has become one of the key words of the post-Foucault academy.) In this analysis every instance of European curiosity about the East, from Flaubert to Marx, was part of a grand design to exploit and remake what Westerners saw as a passive, rich, but ultimately contemptible "Oriental" sphere.

That there is undeniable truth to

not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia?" To the extent that empire licensed this, Marx reasoned, one was entitled to exclaim, with Goethe,

Should this torture then torment us
Since it brings us greater pleasure?
Were not through the rule of Timur
Souls devoured without measure?

Said spent a lot of time "puzzling" (his word) over Marx's ironies here: how could a man of professed human feeling justify conquest and exploitation? The evident answer—that conquest furnished an alternative to the terrifying serfdom and stagnation of antiquity, and that creation can take a destructive form—need have nothing to do with what Said calls "the old inequality between East and West." (The Roman invasion of Britain was also "progress," if the word has any meaning.) Moreover, Marxism in India has often been a strong force for secular government and "nation building," whereas Marxism in China has led by a bloody and contradictory route to a highly dynamic capitalist revolution. To discount all this, as Said did, as a "Romantic Orientalist vision" (and to

simply omit the printing press, the railways, and the rest of it) is to miss the point in a near heroic way.

The lines from Goethe are taken from his *Westöstlicher Diwan*, one of the most meticulous and respectful considerations of the Orient we have. And Said's critics from the conservative side, notably his archenemy Bernard Lewis, have reproached him for leaving German Orientalism out of his account. This is a telling omission, they charge, because Oriental scholarship in Germany, although of an unexampled breadth and splendor, was not put to the service of empire and conquest and annexation. That being so, they argue, what remains of Said's general theory? His reply deals only with the academic aspect of the question: Goethe and Schlegel, he responds, relied on books and collections already made available by British and French imperial expeditions. It might be more exact to point out, as against both Lewis and Said, that Germany *did* have an imperial project. Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Damascus and paid for the restoration of the tomb of Saladin. A *Drang nach Osten* ("drive to the East") was proposed, involving the stupendous scheme of a Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. German imperial explorers and agents were to be found all over the region in the late nineteenth century and up to 1914 and beyond. But of course they were doing all this work in the service of another, allied empire—a Turkish and Islamic one. And that same empire was to issue a call for *jihād*, against Britain and on the side of Germany, in 1914. (The best literary evocation of this extraordinary moment is still *Greenmantle*, written by that veteran empire-builder John Buchan.) However, the inclusion of this important episode would tell against both Said, who doesn't really allow for Muslim or Turkish imperialism, and Lewis, who has always been rather an apologist for the Turks. Osama bin Laden, as we must always remember, began his *jihād* as an explicit attempt to restore the vanished caliphate that once ran the world of Islam from the shores of the Bosphorus. As we often forget, Prussian militarism was his co-sufferer in this pang of loss.



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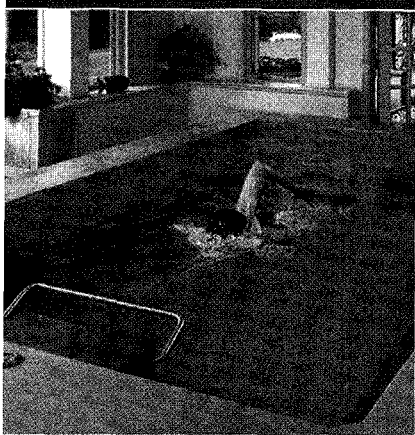
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Among Edward Said's considerable advantages are that he knows very well who John Buchan was and that he, Said, was educated at St. George's, an Anglican establishment in Jerusalem, and also at a colonial mock-English private school, Victoria College, in Cairo. (One of the head boys was Omar Sharif.) There were some undoubtedly penitential aspects to this, recounted with dry humor in his memoir, but they have helped him to be an "outsider" and an exile in several different countries and cultures, including the Palestine of his birth. When he addresses the general Arab audience, he makes admirable use of this duality or multiplicity. In his columns in the Egyptian paper *Al-Ahram* he is scornful and caustic about the failures and disgraces of Arab and Muslim society, and was being so before the celebrated recent United Nations Development Programme report on self-imposed barriers to Arab development, which was written by, among others, his friend Clovis Maksoud. Every year more books are translated and published in Athens than in all the Arab capitals combined. Where is there a decent Arab university? Where is there a "transparent" Arab election? Why does Arab propaganda resort to such ugliness and hysteria?

Much of secular Arab nationalism was led and developed by Europeanized Christians, often Greek Orthodox, whereas much of atavistic Islamic *jihadism* relies on anti-Jewish fabrications produced in the lower reaches of the tsarist Russian Orthodox police state. Said has a fairly exact idea of the traffic between the two worlds, and of what is and is not of value. He is a source of stern admonition to the uncritical, insulated Arab elites and intelligentsia. But for some reason—conceivably connected to his status as an exile—he cannot allow that direct Western engagement in the region is legitimate.

This might be a narrowly defensible position if direct Islamist interference in Western life and society had not become such a factor. When *Orientalism* was first published, the Shah was still a gendarme for American capital in Iran, and his rule was so exorbitantly cruel and corrupt that millions of

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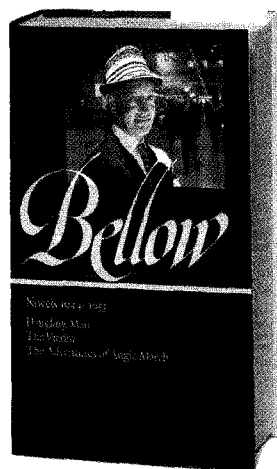
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secularists were willing to make what they hoped was a temporary alliance with Khomeini in order to get rid of it. Today Iranian mullahs are enriching uranium and harboring fugitive bin Ladenists (the slaughterers of their Shia co-religionists in Afghanistan and Pakistan) while students in Tehran risk their lives to demonstrate with pro-American slogans.

How does Said, in his introduction to the new edition of *Orientalism*, deal with this altered and still protean reality? He begins by admitting the self-evident, which is that "neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other." Fair enough. He adds, "That these supreme fictions lend themselves easily to manipulation and the organization of collective passion has never been more evident than in our time, when the mobilizations of fear, hatred, disgust and resurgent self-pride and arrogance—much of it having to do with Islam and the Arabs on one side, 'we' Westerners on the other—are very large-scale enterprises."

This is composed with a certain obliqueness, which may be accidental, but I can't discover that it really means to say that there are delusions on "both" these ontologically nonexistent sides. A few sentences further on we read of "the events of September 11 and their aftermath in the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq." Again, if criticism of both sides is intended (and I presume that it is), it comes served in highly discrepant portions. There's no quarrel with the view that "events" occurred on September 11, 2001; but that the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were wars "against" either country is subject to debate. A professor of English appreciates the distinction, does he not? Or does he, like some puerile recent "activists" (and some less youthful essayists, including Gore Vidal), think that the United States could not wait for a chance to invade Afghanistan in order to build a pipeline across it? American Orientalism doesn't seem that restless from where I sit; it asks only that Afghans leave it alone.

Misgivings on this point turn into serious doubts when one gets to the



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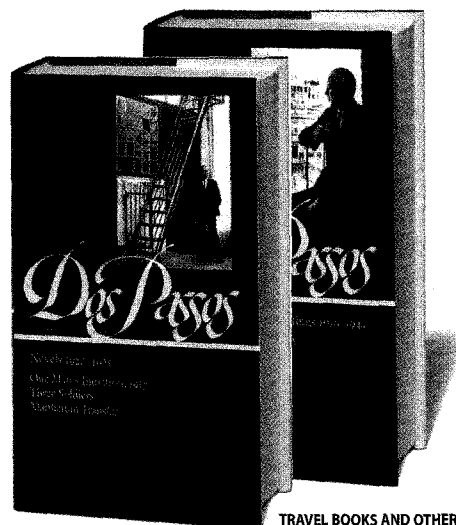
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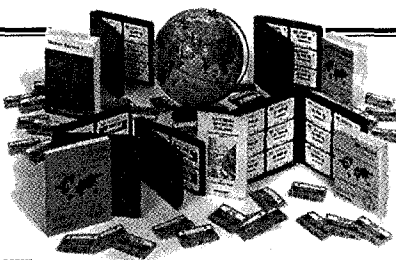
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next paragraph: "In the US, the hardening of attitudes, the tightening of the grip of demeaning generalization and triumphalist cliché, the dominance of crude power allied with simplistic contempt for dissenters and 'others,' has found a fitting correlative in the looting, pillaging and destruction of Iraq's libraries and museums."

Here, for some reason, "other" is represented lowercase. But there can't be much doubt as to meaning. The American forces in Baghdad set themselves to annihilate Iraq's cultural patrimony. Can Said mean to say this? Well, he says it again a few lines further on, when he asserts that current Western policy amounts to "power acting through an expedient form of knowledge to assert that this is the Orient's nature, and we must deal with it accordingly."

In the process the uncountable sediments of history, which include innumerable histories and a dizzying variety of peoples, languages, experiences, and cultures, all these are swept aside or ignored, relegated to the sand heap along with the treasures ground into meaningless fragments that were taken out of Baghdad's libraries and museums. My argument is that history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and re-written, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated, so that "our" East, "our" Orient, becomes "ours" to possess and direct.

This passage is rescued from sheer vulgarity only by its incoherence. The sole testable proposition (or nontautology) is the fantastic allegation that American forces powdered the artifacts of the Iraq museum in order to show who was boss. And the essential emptiness of putting the "our" in quotation marks, with its related insistence on possession and appropriation, is nakedly revealed thereby. We can be empirically sure of four things: that by design the museums and libraries of Baghdad survived the earlier precision bombardment without a scratch or a splinter; that much of the looting and desecration occurred before coalition forces had complete control of the city; that no looting was committed by U.S. soldiers; and that the substantial reconstitution of the museum's collection has been undertaken

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by the occupation authorities, and their allies among Iraqi dissidents, with considerable care and scruple. This leaves only two arguable questions: How much more swiftly might the coalition troops have moved to protect the galleries and shelves? And how are we to divide the responsibility for desecration and theft between Iraqi officials and Iraqi mobs? The depravity of both is, to be sure, partly to be blamed on the Saddam regime; would it be too "Orientalist" to go any further?

I said earlier that I wondered whether Said was affected, in this direly excessive rhetoric, by his role as an exile. I am moved to ask again by his repeated and venomous attacks on Ahmed Chalabi and Kanan Makiya, Iraqi oppositionists denounced by him, in effect, for living in the West and being expatriates. Never mind that this is a tactical trope of which Said should obviously beware. The existence of such men suggests to me, in contrast, that there is every hope of cultural and political cross-pollination between the Levant, the Orient, the Near East, the Middle East, Western Asia (whatever name you may choose to give it), and the citizens of the Occident, the North, the metropole. In recent arguments in Washington about democracy and self-determination and pluralism, it seemed to me that the visiting Iraqi and Kurdish activists had a lot more to teach than to learn.

At that same far-off and long-ago conference in Cyprus, so near to the old Crusader fortresses of Famagusta, Kantara, and St. Hilarion, I also had the good fortune to encounter Sir Steven Runciman, whose history of the Crusades is an imperishable work, because it demonstrates that medieval Christian fundamentalism not only constituted a menace to Islamic civilization but also directly resulted in the sack of Byzantium, the retardation of Europe, and the massacre of the Jews. It is desirable that the opponents of today's fanaticisms be as cool and objective in their recognition of a common enemy, and it is calamitous that one who had that opportunity should have chosen to miss it. **A**

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic, and also a columnist for Vanity Fair. His latest book, A Long Short War: The Postponed Liberation of Iraq, has just been published.

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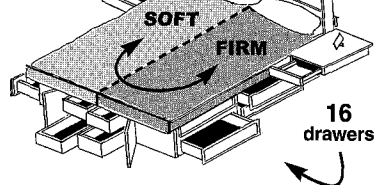
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BOOKS

CALIFORNIA CATHOLICS

*Maile Meloy's first novel uses gaudy old-time religion to
string together a sweeping family narrative*

BY THOMAS MALLON

.....

American Catholicism was once so scarlet with absolutes and certainties that glamorous converts would fall on their knees before Bishop Sheen, while intellectually rebellious communicants, along with the sexually guilty, would flee in angry, soul-risking apostasy. To those of the faithful with long memories, the new Church, forty years into its age of reform, seems as blandly embracing as Unitarianism—less Hail Mary than hail-fellow-well-met, with its handshakes of peace toward the close of a mass that's more “participatory” than a PTA meeting.

The post-Vatican II Church has been as much a problem for fiction writers as for conservative bishops. *Liars and Saints*, Maile Meloy's engaging but slapdash first novel, is something of a case in point. The author gives us more than fifty years of the Santerre family, California Catholics, but clearly knows that the pre-1960s religious material—heart-in-mouth confessions; fervent collecting for the missions; ecstatic conventual retreats—is stronger, gaudier stuff than the modern, guitar-strumming version that eventually demoralized the Church's laity and, in a sort of reversal of the loaves and fishes, decimated its priesthood. Meloy wisely stays away from much consideration of the latter, though it has to be said that even her old-time religion is mostly a motif that helps to string four generations of Santerres into a narrative rosary for a novel that otherwise has the big familial concerns of commercial fiction on its mind.

Good-looking Teddy and Yvette marry during World War II and stay together, despite Teddy's over-the-top jealousy. He could always arouse himself sexually with fantasies of Yvette's infidelity, and her admission that she received a photographer's kiss while he was over in Korea leaves them to “[settle] into a life together that felt like a truce.”

The couple's two daughters—obedient Margot and more rebellious Clarissa—serve as opposites in the manner of a parable, though it's the teenage Margot who winds up pregnant by Mr. Tucker, the dancing teacher who comes to give lessons at Sacred Heart High. Hustled off to sympathetic relatives in France, she gives birth, in 1959, to a boy named

LIARS AND SAINTS

by Maile Meloy
Scribner

Jamie; her mother, the still youthful Yvette, manages through travel and trickery to pass the infant off—even to Teddy—as her own son. This

smoldering family secret is able to remain one for as long as it does in part because of Margot's aversion to the baby; for years after his birth, even when the childlessness of her marriage appears to be permanent, she wants almost nothing to do with Jamie, whom his “sister” Clarissa loves much more demonstratively.

It's plausible that Jamie in his early thirties would push against emerging cracks in the cover-up in order to find out the truth. It's less believable that he would fall into a second bloodline-bending imbroglio, fathering a child by Clarissa's daughter, Abby. T. J., the baby born to them, is almost comically suggestive of the Trinity, uniting as he does the family's interchangeable generations.

One can't deny Meloy's enthusiasm for her material, even though some of her incidental inventions, such as Jamie's teenage bondage romance (he “had briefly been a Boy Scout” but “Gail was better at knots than he was”) and the eventual grasp of a New Age Mr. Tucker to the extended-family bosom, inspire less than full credence. Meloy's good-heartedness toward most of her dramatic personae makes us smell the green tomatoes frying, and when Yvette says “I just love this family,” the character seems to be delivering a promo.

Liars and Saints is not what I would have expected from the author of *Half in Love*, Meloy's fine short-story collection,

published last year and just issued in paperback. The best of that book's pieces involve rural westerners, sometimes from the author's native Montana, with small-time financial and big-time romantic woes. The author is restrained in syntax and style, but unafraid of strong emotion, strong sadness. The stories often cover mere slices of time, and Meloy doesn't so much realize her material as nail it like a gymnast. She may display too much fondness for having the main story resonate against a parallel one that lurks within its pages, but not even such telltale craving for amplitude prepares a reader for the sprawling chronicle of the Santerres.

In *Liars and Saints*, Meloy has so much time and biology to keep track of that her crisp writing goes slack and generic in quite a number of places: "Yvette had explained that it was different when she was a little girl: everyone wanted to be a wife and a mother then ... The girls her daughters' age, who had so many options, didn't seem to be happy with any of them." The flat efficiency of so much of what's here—"It all seemed too far away, and too unreal"; "The discovery took her breath away"—would disappoint even those who didn't know that this author has done much, much better. Ironies get underlined in such a way that once we're told Clarissa's husband, Henry, is "so rocklike ... it seemed like he would never go away," we know for sure that he's out of here. The book sometimes feels like an elaborate set of notes for a novel Meloy intends to go back and actually write.

Certainly, there are fine touches ("The Navy packed everything in boxes and moved it to California, including three dead Honolulu cockroaches with wings"; in person "Ronald Reagan, the host of *G. E. Theater* ... seemed brighter than normal people, like a painting"), but such flowers can't get enough sun for all the shade being cast by the huge Santerre family tree. My sense of Meloy's talents makes me think she'd be wiser to write next about six months in Montana instead of fifty years in and out of California. She's a good writer, but I'm agnostic as to whether she's a novelist. **A**

Thomas Mallon's new novel, Bandbox, will be published in January.

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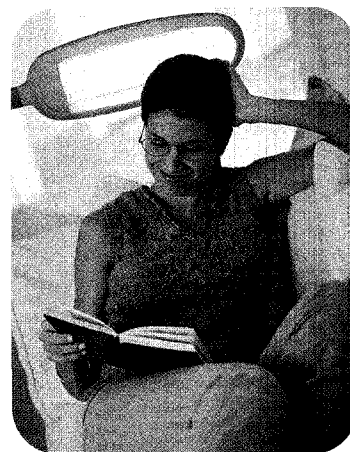
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ON SECOND THOUGHT

Ideas whose time has come, unfortunately

BY CULLEN MURPHY

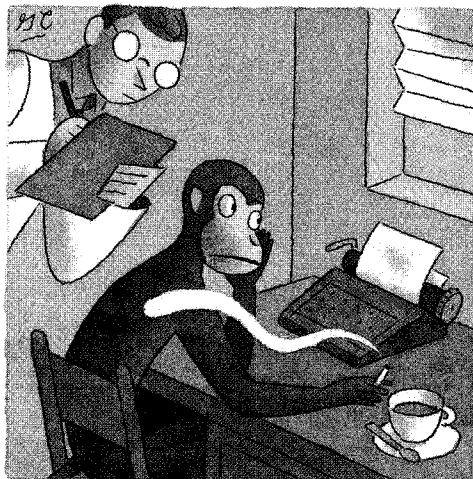
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Earlier this year headlines on the obituary pages of many newspapers carried the name of Charles Rolland Douglass, who died in April at his home in Templeton, California, at the age of ninety-three. Douglass was the inventor of something that has intersected with the lives of nearly all Americans—the television laugh track. His Laff Box, developed in the 1950s, has since evolved into a far more sophisticated instrument, capable of producing moans and groans, *oohs* and *aahs*.

The laugh track is something that elite critics of television like to ridicule for its vulgarian artifice—it somehow epitomizes the awfulness, as they see it, of television itself. But the laugh track solved a big problem. Humor is best presented, and comedy most fully experienced, in the context of a crowd. An imperfect substitute, the laugh track proved triumphant nonetheless, helping to make possible the emergence of comedy as television's finest creative achievement. I'm sure the grief at Charles Douglass's funeral was real, but in this case a little canned emotion would have been a wholly appropriate touch.

A handful of people improve the world substantially in more ways than one; and of course the vast majority of us leave no enduring mark on the world at all. But a significant number of people are each responsible for a single notable accomplishment, and they are a mainstay of the obituary columns. Recent years have given us—actually, taken from us—the inventor of the three-point seat belt, Nils Bohlin; the inventor of Kitty Litter, Edward Lowe; and the inventor of Velcro, Georges de Mestral.

Early this summer the Federal Trade Commission inaugurated the immensely popular "Do Not Call" Registry, enabling consumers to remove their names and phone numbers from the databanks of intrusive telemarketers. Someday an obituary for Timothy J. Muris will remind a forgetful public of the FTC chairman responsible for this supreme act of public service. Let us hope that it does not have to be written for many years! By then, a



generation from now, children will give little credence to their grandparents' tales of dinnertime browbeating by computerized pitchmen—tales that will seem as preposterous as dentistry without painkillers.

As uplifting as such stories of achievement can be, they have a grim and more plentiful counterpart in the careers of men and women who spend their lives in pursuit of the misguided. "That fellow seems to me to possess but one idea," Samuel Johnson observed, "and that is a wrong one." Johnson's comment might

well apply to Hans-Friedrich von Ploetz, Germany's ambassador to Great Britain, who has lately launched a crusade to make the teaching of German compulsory in British elementary schools. A previous German outreach effort, in 1939–1945, having come to naught, the ambassador is directing his energies at Great Britain's Department for Education. As one might expect, the ambassador's suggestion has elicited a certain amount of dyspeptic commentary and popular opposition (*Volkswiderstand*). It is only a matter of time before someone reminds Von Ploetz of the emperor Charles V's remark "I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men, and German to my horse."

Mike Phillips and his colleagues at Plymouth University, in England, recently found themselves drawn to a very different sort of bad idea. The Victorian naturalist Thomas Huxley, arguing for the organizing power of random chance, allegedly advanced the conceit that an infinite number of monkeys banging away at typewriters over the course of infinity would eventually produce the works of Shakespeare. The Plymouth researchers set out to explore this proposition, giving six Sulawesi crested macaques the use of a computer for four weeks. In the end the monkeys produced not a single word, and showed little interest in any key but S. "Another thing they were interested in," a spokesman for the project said, "was defecating and urinating all over the keyboard."

The Plymouth researchers seem to have achieved an ironic distance from their experiment, but the only possible reaction to many other efforts is: What *were* they thinking? A case in point was the plan by the French synchronized-swimming team at the 1996 Olympics to re-create the experience of Nazi death camps by means of a choreographed

aquatic ballet. Last year legislators in Nevada approved a measure that would have put an atomic mushroom cloud on state license plates—a move that wiser heads (at the Department of Motor Vehicles, of all places) managed to deflect. Anyone who goes to the finer restaurants has noticed a growing tendency to explain the manner in which the fish or meat on his or her plate lived its life and met its end—details that most people would prefer to be spared. In Washington from time to time proposals are heard to allow advertising on U.S. currency (as a way of raising money) and even to sell naming rights to national shrines. (The Ford Lincoln Memorial? The Victoria's Secret Reflecting Pool?)

Perhaps the most ineradicable bad idea of recent decades has been the yellow Smiley face. Released into the ecosystem in 1963, Smiley and mutations like Frowney have by now colonized every inch of the planet. Smiley-face sweatshirts are today worn by *peshtmerga* guerrillas in Kurdistan and child mercenaries in Liberia. Smiley's creator, Harvey R. Ball, died not long ago, at the age of seventy-nine. One can't help wondering, did friends and family wear Smiley at the funeral? Or did they wear Frowney?

One of the most haunting repositories of truly bad ideas is the well-trafficked Web site of the Darwin Awards, devoted to those who "protect our gene pool by making the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives" through some "astounding misapplication of judgment." Consider, for instance, a recent incident in the Swiss Alps.

A 53-year-old Glasgow man, attempting what police describe as a bizarre stunt, attached a climber's snap hook to an unused overhead tram cable and attempted to manually ride down the mountain. But the mountain was steep, gravity was constant, and he was unable to moderate his rate of descent ...

In an age replete with bad ideas, competition for the designation Worst Idea of All is obviously intense. A friend of mine collects manifestations of the term "a new low," and long ago concluded that this is a concept without a floor. There may in fact be no Worst Idea of All, but the worst idea I've heard *lately* comes from a company (or perhaps just a Web site)

called Coincidence Design, Inc. Let's say a young man becomes aware of a young woman but isn't quite sure how best to make an approach or even whether the young woman meets his exacting standards. The experts at Coincidence Design offer a full range of services. "We can observe her movements from dawn to dusk," the Web site explains. "We can use a clever pretext to interview roommates and classmates from her past and colleagues and girlfriends from her present."

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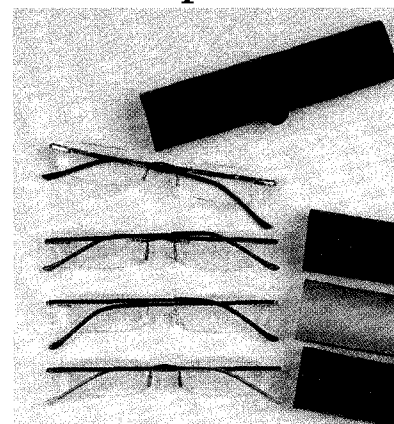
It may just be me, but I'd bet that the "what frightens her, what does she hate?" category would include finding the paperwork for this arrangement in her new spouse's desk. One can almost see the murderous gleam as her hand steals toward the letter opener. Coincidence Design touts its service as a way of "evening out the distribution of luck in the world." More likely it's an example of how the pursuit of reproductive success can itself lead to sudden removal from the gene pool—and the purchase, in a sense, of a \$78,000 Darwin Award. If that award is ever bestowed, we can thank Charles Rolland Douglass for the right sounds to go with it. **A**

Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic's managing editor.

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TRAVELS

BAD DEBT

Settling accounts in the vacuum of postwar Iraq

BY TISH DURKIN

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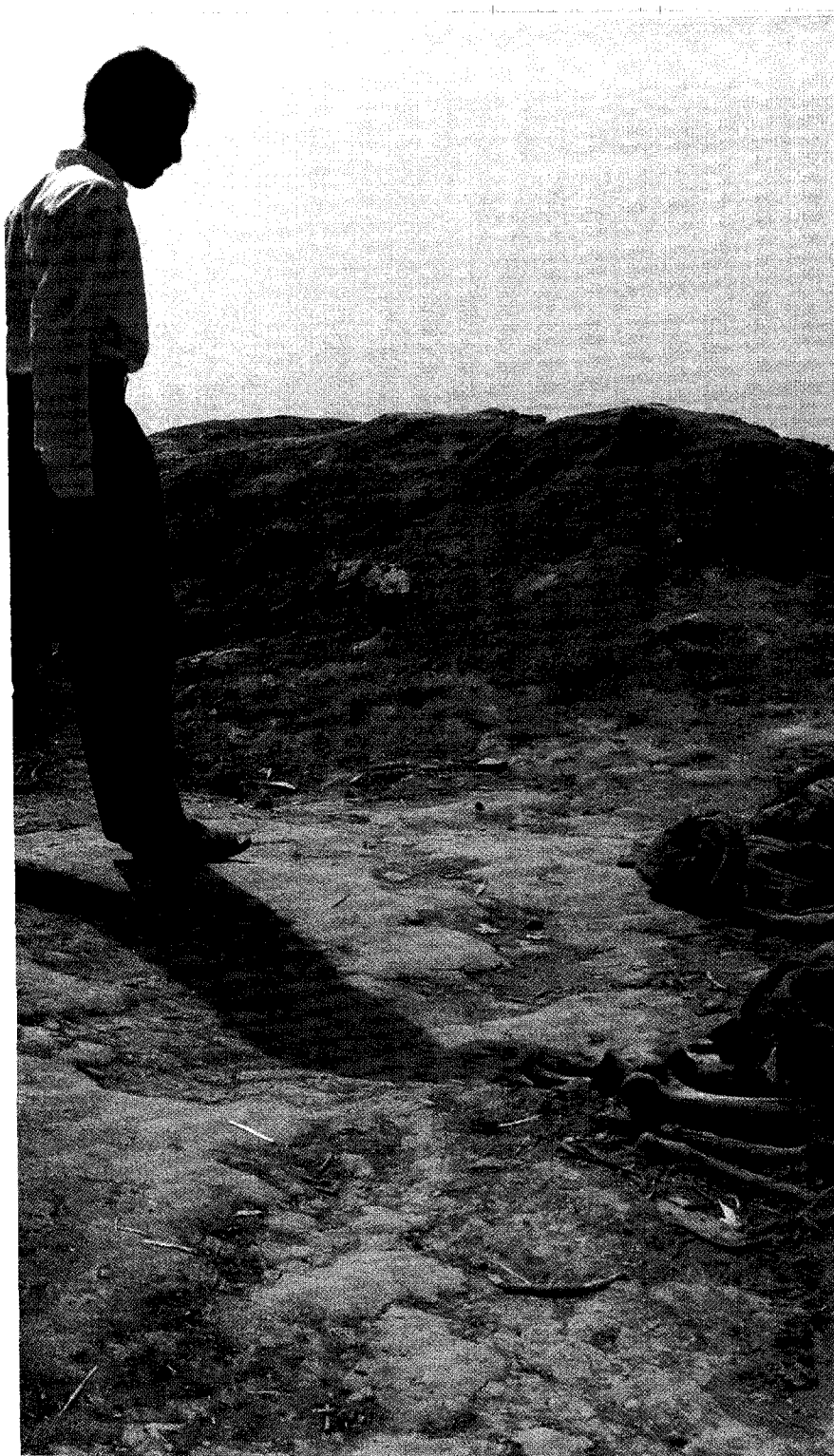


“Before they came, they sent a bulldozer to dig a big hole,” explained Said Jabir al-Husseini, a fifty-one-year-old farmer who owned the land just next to the land where he was standing—leaning, really, on a wooden walking stick. “After that they brought people blindfolded and hands tied behind their backs.”

Al-Husseini could not have been more obliging, but everything about him was dark: his coffee-ground eyes,

his cracked-clay face, his gray-dusted black beard, the black netted jacket that lay over his black *dishdashah*, and, darkest of all, the memory on his mind. In 1991, as the Shiites of southern Iraq rose up against the regime of Saddam Hussein and were brutally put down again, al-Husseini witnessed the digging and the filling of a mass grave here at al-Mahaweel, a little more than an hour’s drive south of Baghdad, in the Babel region.

About a week before I arrived, in late May, the grave had been discovered. Now it was a scene of bustling desperation. A stream of Shiites came in hopes of finding long-missing loved ones among the dunes of skulls and bones. Local volunteers were digging up the remains, placing them in plastic bags, and lining the bags up in rows. Now and then the anguish would boil over, as someone finally found a relative—or didn’t. U.S. Marines were on hand,



mouth shut for twelve years," he told me.

Understandable though this silence was, not everyone understood it. As we talked, people came up to al-Husseini periodically and hit him with a spitball of angry Arabic, scolding him for not coming forward sooner, before their relatives' bodies had been reduced to bone.

Such anger, however, was not in the same universe of rage as that expressed at the man whom these people held most responsible—apart from Saddam Hussein—for what had occurred here: Sheikh Muhammad Jawad al-Naifus, whom U.S. forces had taken into custody in late April and, according to a Marine colonel at the site, were holding on suspicion of mass murder. The sheikh, a few conversations made clear, was viewed as Saddam's eyes, ears, and fist in this area. Now he was also widely viewed as a man who should hang.

Significantly, one person who held this view was a long-bearded, thickly robed old man whose bearing managed somehow to telegraph sorrow, fury, and prestige. He was a member of the Hawza, the Najaf-based Shiite religious body that—emboldened by the fall of the regime—was exerting increasing influence over Iraqi life, influence that was spilling forth from mosques and into hospitals, schools, and police stations. He was at the grave to ensure the proper Islamic redispersion of the victims' bodies. He also favored the proper Islamic disposal of the sheikh's case: swift, sure, and in a Hawza court.

It was not generally agreed at the mass grave that Sheikh al-Naifus should be tried by an Islamic court, but it was emphatically insisted that he and people like him should be tried by an Iraqi court, before the Iraqi public. People clearly feared that such criminals might be subjected to unduly soft American or, worse yet, non-Iraqi Arab justice, and would ultimately be spared or spirited away. But the U.S. military was quick to assuage such fears. Although it had been U.S. forces that arrested al-Naifus, along with two of his sons and two of his grandsons, at his mansion in the nearby village of Balwan, the Marines at the gravesite gave the strong impression that this had been done

strictly, they emphasized, to support the Iraqi effort.

Every day since the digging began, al-Husseini had come here and brought lunch for the workers. Twelve years earlier, from March 7 to April 6 of 1991, he and his father and several of his five brothers had spent every day hiding among some trees and watching as a steady flow of victims arrived by pickup truck and school bus, in groups of approximately 130 to 150. Like other wit-

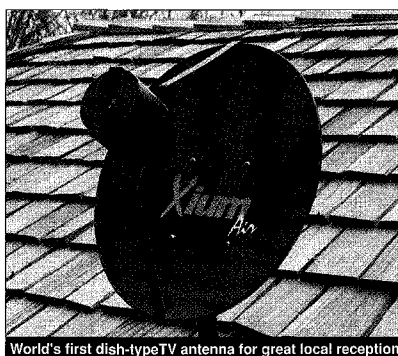
nesses to this and similar massacres, al-Husseini described a hyper, hurry-it-up quality to the killing. Asked why this was, he cited the powerful, if dubious, rumor that everyone else cited: the regime compensated the killers at a rate of 3,000 dinars (about \$9,000 at the time) per victim.

When they went home each night, al-Husseini said, he and his family talked about what they should do, and came to the conclusion that, for survival's sake, they should do nothing. "I kept my

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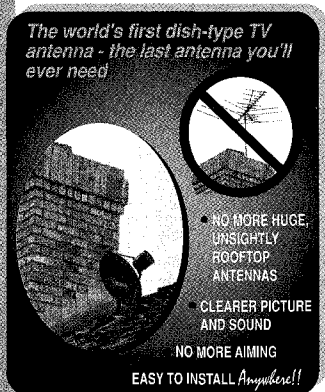
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largely to keep him safe and available until such time as the appropriate Iraqi court could be established.

The question of safety, at least, was real. While al-Naifus was in custody at the police station in the nearby city of al-Hillah, the capital of the Babel region, a local mob gathered to demand his immediate execution. Some Marines later told me, a little derisively, that Iskandar Jawad Witwit, the newly installed, U.S.-approved governor of Babel, had publicly called for his hanging on the spot—which Witwit, a dapper but perpetually harried official, made no attempt to deny when I met with him later at his office in al-Hillah. During the same visit I spoke with the Babel police chief, who had on his shirtsleeve a patch from the Philadelphia Police Department, recently given to him by a well-wishing officer from the City of Brotherly Love. "Al-Naifus is not like a regular criminal," the chief said. "I think he is not a human being."

Absolutely, we want to take our revenge from al-Naifus," one of Said Jabir al-Husseini's neighbors told me. We were sitting on a cold stone floor, eating acres of rice and beans off flat tin platters in a structure made of emptied sugarcane stalks. This was an outbuilding on al-Husseini's farm, and being in it was like being in a cool, dim Easter basket. On one wall, as on a wall in almost every home in this part of Iraq, hung a huge, bright picture of Ali and Hussein, the founding figures of Shiism; the standard emerald green of their headpieces almost glowed in the half dark. After giving his eyewitness account, al-Husseini had invited me to lunch along with my interpreter, Ahmad Abdullah Salih, a former Iraqi air-force pilot. About a dozen other local men were present, and they were speculating on what, if anything, should happen to the sheikh's family. "We want to kick them out," the neighbor continued.

Al-Husseini displayed much less bluster, and much more pragmatism, on this topic. Later I asked him whether it would be acceptable for the al-Naifus family to sell its land and keep the money. He replied that it would be, as long as the family left the area, but that

in the end it was not up to him; it all depended on what the Hawza said. I asked if he would accept it if the Hawza pronounced that the family should be left alone, and he replied that he would—but added that the Hawza would never do such a thing.

"If the sheikh's family wants to look for trouble," the neighbor fumed, "there will be trouble."

"It's not a mass grave," sixty-two-year-old Sami Jawad al-Naifus, the ninth of the sheikh's nine brothers, had told us the day before. Ahmad and I had just made the first of several visits to the mass grave; it was on our second visit that we met al-Husseini. "It is nothing to do with 1991."

Ahmad and I had not expected to find the al-Naifus family at home. We had driven the few minutes from the mass grave to Balwan to learn whether its people felt threatened by revenge seekers, who might not take care to establish who had what, if any, connection to the sheikh and his alleged misdeeds. One of the villagers pointed out the house of the sheikh. Pulling through the open gate and into the bare, sun-seared courtyard, we expected to see that the place had been looted. But there they were, several of the sheikh's male relatives, and they invited us right into their *diwan*, the traditional parlor in which Arabs effusively greet, and seat, their guests.

Despite the sheikh's rumored wealth, the house looked rich only in that it was large, and the *diwan* evoked not splendor so much as comfort. Thickly, immaculately upholstered cushions ran the lengths of each of the four long walls, which—the sheikh being a Sunni—were bare of Ali and Hussein. Cold Pepsi soon came on a tray, and then glasses of hot tea, later followed by a simple but impeccably prepared and presented lunch of rice and chicken and yogurt and salads and fruit.

During our conversation, about a wall's worth of cushioning was taken up by al-Naifus men and assorted associates who had materialized, but most of the talking was done by Sami Jawad and by Ali Jassim, who introduced himself as the sheikh's nephew and appeared to be in his early thirties.

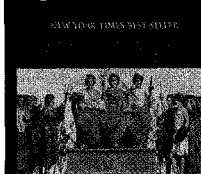
Ahmad and I apologized for barging in like this. Ali Jassim exclaimed that appointments were never required, adding that if the sheikh himself had been present, he would have had something slaughtered especially for us. Each year at Eid al-Fitr, the feast that marks the end of Ramadan fasting, fifty or sixty local people would be invited into this room, Ali Jassim said, and the sheikh would give them money. When, right after the troubles of 1991, Saddam Hussein came to thank the sheikh for what Sami Jawad characterized as "taking control of the area," he didn't stay long enough to enjoy much refreshment. He did, however, leave a white 1990 Mercedes as a gift. But this, Sami Jawad cautioned, should not be taken to mean that the sheikh and Saddam were friends.

"It was his wish to protect the area," Sami Jawad said, explaining the sheikh's control-taking efforts in 1991. These efforts, according to him, consisted of nothing more sinister than setting up some checkpoints, aiding in the apprehension of looters, and "stopping all the nasty people"—helping, in fact, to stem the very kind of chaos that was paralyzing Iraq as we spoke. "It was nothing to do with the Saddam regime."

Curiously, though, even as family members denied their connection to Saddam, they bragged about it. This was the first hint that a distinctive verbal gift ran in the family: a gift for unblinking self-contradiction. As the reasoning flowed in one direction, it flowed in the opposite direction as well, so that great, rushing streams of protestation to one effect ran right alongside great, rushing streams of protestation to the opposite effect, with no one seeming to notice. This rendered the conversation almost useless for establishing facts, but very useful for mapping the distance the family had created between itself and the neighboring grave.

"Do you know why Saddam gave him a lot of gifts?" asked a sheikh from one of the lesser branches of the al-Naifus family, who had arrived quite far along in the discussion. He was very tall and free of sweat, and the bright, crisp whiteness of his kaffiyah and *dishdashah* made it seem weirdly as if the answer would be "Because he used *Tide*!" The

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reason, he explained, was that when Saddam's military established a base in the area, the sheikh merely extended his trademark hospitality. So the family wished to stress that the sheikh had not done anything in particular to merit the love of Saddam. But then again, it wished to imply that he *had*.

"Saddam Hussein gave gifts to all the sheikhs and all the people who protected their own area," Sami Jawad said. "But Sheikh Muhammad was given more than the rest of the sheikhs." Along with the Mercedes, he claimed, had come five million dinars (about \$15 million).

The visit ended where it had started: on the subject of the mass grave. Here again the conversation ran in two direc-

of the older cousin had been identified, perhaps less reliably, by a gray *dishdashah* and white underwear. In any event, both bodies had just been reburied in proper graves.

Abd al-Hamza alleged that soon after his cousins disappeared, one of the sheikh's relatives visited and offered to get them released, provided that the family pay 3,000 dinars by a specific date. At the time, Abd al-Hamza said, he earned 125 dinars a month. The family managed to collect the money, but not until two days after the deadline, so the offer was rescinded. Still, at no point in the previous twelve years had they given up entirely.

"We asked the sheikh many times,"

The sheikh exhibited a boyish cheeriness, but he was still the sheikh: a man who could ask to tell his side of the story in such a way that it was not a request at all.

tions. In less than an hour the family went from flat denial that the mass grave was a mass grave to admission that further investigation might very well establish that it was a mass grave to acknowledgment that the bodies of a couple of people from Balwan had been discovered in the mass grave.

In fact, a young al-Naifus man offered to hop into his truck and lead our car to the house of the family whose members had been unearthed. After a brief drive, he signaled out his window at a dwelling much smaller than the al-Naifus family's. Ahmad and I stopped, and he honked good-bye and drove away.

A man named Faras Abd al-Hamza opened the door. Given who had led us to him, we assumed that any impulse he had to say anything negative about the sheikh had, one way or another, been forestalled. This was not so.

"We knew there were plenty of mass graves in this area," Abd al-Hamza said, explaining how his family knew where to look for his two missing relatives, male cousins, who were thirteen and thirty-five at the time of their disappearance. The body of the younger one had been identified by a watch that the boy had inherited from his father, who had been killed in the Iran-Iraq war. The body

he said, "and he left us with hopes they are still alive, maybe they are in jail." Abd al-Hamza, like others, claimed that the sheikh had occasionally been seen at the jail—which many locals believed had been packed with recent, innocent detainees—picking out favored people to set free.

All the same, I asked, would he say that the sheikh was actively involved in the massacre or simply took no action to stop it? "The sheikh is involved," Abd al-Hamza said, with neither doubt nor drama. "He's in the middle, actually, of these troubles." Was it possible that the sheikh was just acting on orders from Saddam, to save his own family? "Some people accepted Saddam's orders as a slave," he said, "and some people said no." What if the sheikh somehow got out of prison or left the country without facing Iraqi justice? "I'll take revenge from him by myself," Abd al-Hamza said, again without thunder. "I'll kill him."

Ahmad and I should not have been surprised, a few days later, to find the sheikh at large in Baghdad. But we were. We met him by appointment in his brother's house, the day after visiting a Baghdad bus company—owned by the sheikh's family—in hopes of finding out

exactly where he was being held. The relative working there told us that he had been released, and the shock of that announcement carried through to the following day's meeting.

The sheikh, who is eighty-one, is slight, with a neat, snowy moustache. His very old face flushed with gratitude and good humor; he toyed with a string of clear amber prayer beads in his brother's *diwan*. The *diwan* was full of male relatives and friends, and during our visit of an hour or so more came through, to kiss the old man's hand and celebrate his good fortune. (Good fortune had yet to bless his sons and grandsons, who remained in prison but whose release, the family believed, was imminent.)

The sheikh exulted over the treatment he had received from his American captors: "There were nice beds, bathrooms, soap, hot water, cold water, good food, perfect food, different kinds of food ... Iraqi food." At one point, the sheikh said, a male soldier and a female soldier brought a bottle of cold water and washed his head; at another, in order to show understanding for how much the sheikh missed his family, a soldier shared a picture of his own wife and children.

At such recollections the sheikh exhibited an almost boyish cheeriness, but mostly he was the quintessential sheikh: a man given to observations like "I am sheikh. I am famous. I am part of the biggest family in Iraq"; a man who could announce his inability to read or write almost as a point of pride; a man who could ask to tell his side of the story—beginning from the time of King Faisal—in such a way that it was not a request at all.

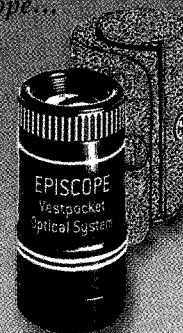
The sheikh explained that he had been detained in several places. At various times he was kept with the sons and grandsons with whom he had been arrested; at other times he was alone. First he was taken to Saddam's palace at al-Hillah, which had been made into a U.S. Marine command post. The next day he was transferred to the police station at al-Hillah, where the mob, and the governor, threatened to lynch him. During this period, the sheikh recalled to general nods, his family offered to

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ANSWERS TO THE JULY/AUGUST PUZZLER

F	R	A	N	C	S	B	A	G	H	D	A	D
U	A	U	R	A	I	D	R	P	E	A	C	E
G	C	T	E	R	E	C	T	S	A	C	I	E
A	L	U	M	O	C	L	I	G	U	A	N	A
L	A	M	A	U	L	A	C	K	U	P	G	U
H	U	N	K	S	E	A	L	P	R	O	W	L
U	S	S	N	A	A	U	E	A	N	S	I	U
M	E	T	A	L	B	O	B	L	E	O	N	E
A	S	E	B	T	O	A	U	A	N	A	N	A
U	P	H	I	L	L	R	D	T	L	A	O	S
A	A	R	S	P	I	D	G	I	N	U	W	T
C	R	A	C	K	S	H	I	A	U	O	N	E
K	E	N	O	S	H	A	E	L	I	X	I	R

"Word Magic"

Across. 1. FRANC(e)s 5. BAGHDAD (*bagged ad* homophone) 11. UP + BRA + ID 12. P(E)ACE
14. ERECTS (anag.) 16. ALUM (double def.) 17. I + CU(A)N + A 18. LAM(P)B + LACK
19. HUN(K)S 20. PROW + L 22. S(NAP + BE)ANS 26. M(E)AL 29. L(E)ONE 31. TO(PB) + A
+ NANA 33. U + PHIL + L 34. L(A)OS 35. PIDGIN (homophone) 36. CRACK (double def.)
37. H(IP)ONE (*bop in* anag.) 38. KENOSHA (anag.) Down. 1. FUG + AL(I) 2. AUTUMNS
(anag.) 3. C + AROUSAL 4. SIECLE (hidden) 6. (p)ARTICLE 7. HEP + BURN 8. D(A + CAP)O
9. (T)ACING 10. DEEP BLUE (spoonerism) 13. C(L)AUSE 15. CLAP + BOAR + D 19. HUM +
P(B)ACK 20. PALATIAL (anag.) 21. WIN + NOW 23. NABISCO (anag.) 24. ABOLISH (anag.)
25. SO + A + P + BOX 27. TEHRAN (anag.) 28. BUDG(E) 30. SPARE (double def.) 32. (T)ASTER

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try to spring him by force, but he refused. After six days and a brief stopover back at the palace, the sheikh was flown by helicopter to what he later realized was the airport jail in the city of al-Diwaniyah, where he spent four days. Then he was taken by car to the jail at Baghdad International Airport, where he spent nine days. Finally, he and one grandson were taken to the Enemy Prisoner of War internment facility at Umm Qasr. The facility, he recalled, was a sea of tents. "They told me I should choose any tent I liked." On the fifth day there officials gave him his papers, a lift to the transport terminal, a box of food, and enough cash to hop a cab by himself to Baghdad—which, unbeknownst even to his family, he did.

Later on in our conversation the sheikh furnished, unprompted, the form release papers, dated May 18, 2003. They gave such information as his Enemy Prisoner of War number (ISN US 9IZ-109366) and his date of birth (1/1/1922). They also described the terms of his release.

The Board reached the conclusion that there was no evidence to doubt that the person was a civilian status and there was no evidence to support an assertion that he had committed a belligerent act against coalition forces ... It was further satisfied that there was no further realistic investigation that could be undertaken in respect of this individual's case.

Of course, no one had accused the sheikh of being anything but a civilian, or of threatening coalition forces in any way. Everyone, including the U.S. military, had described his alleged offenses as Iraqi crimes against Iraqi citizens—crimes that indeed should be addressed in an Iraqi court of some kind. The release papers said nothing about the sheikh's being obligated to remain in the country or otherwise available for further questioning, and the sheikh insisted that he had been released on no conditions of any kind.

Nor, he took pains to say, should there have been any conditions. After all, he was completely innocent: not only did he have no part in the creation of the mass grave near his home but he had been totally shocked to learn, just recently, of its existence. He had been

well aware, however, of the mass jailing that had preceded the mass burial. In fact, the sheikh volunteered that, just as his accusers charged, he had visited the jail, had intervened in behalf of a few prisoners, and had declined to intervene in behalf of others. But this, he insisted, did not mean that he had had the slightest idea of, let alone a hand in, the fate that awaited those prisoners to whom he denied favor.

The sheikh's release papers closed by stating that the U.S. military was no longer responsible for his safety. Even if he was innocent, I remarked, so many around him believed with all their bitter hearts that he was guilty. Wasn't he afraid?

At this point one of the sheikh's nephews, a middle-aged man whose *dishdashah* bunched around a great watermelon of a belly, grew animated. He vowed that "more than a hundred thousand" members of the extended family would retaliate against any who attacked the sheikh, and he boasted of the family arsenal—pistols, AK-47s, and such—with which they'd retaliate.

The sheikh appreciated this display, but remained calm throughout it. Though friends had advised him to disappear, he said, he would not. "Where shall I go?" he asked. "I'll never leave my house. I'll stay because I am right." Even as the sheikh was speaking, it was hard to believe he was there. The total—if totally illusory—absence of any sense of menace felt equal parts incredible and irrefutable. The next day Ahmad and I stopped in again at Iskandar Witwit's office in al-Hillah, and by then it just seemed incredible.

A minute after we arrived, Witwit took a telephone call in which he was told that the sheikh had been released. Although he dismissed this entirely as a rumor, he sent someone to ask around in Balwan. "No, no," Witwit said, shaking his head and slashing the air with his hand when we asked what would happen if the news turned out to be true. "People are going to be angry with the American Army. There's going to be a lot of trouble." ▀

Tish Durkin is a freelance writer based in Washington, D.C.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Spoonerfest

A spoonerism involves the swapping of initial consonant sounds in two words or phrases, such as CHOPSTICKS and STOP CHICKS; COAST GUARD and GHOST CARD; STAY AWAKE and WEIGH A STEAK. It's a homophonic affair; spelling changes appropriately in the newly formed words. In this puzzle 12 clues must have their answers spoonerized for entry in the diagram; 12 clues involve a spoonerism in the definition of the answer; and 12 clues are normal, with answers to be entered normally. Five answers are capitalized.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 169.

ACROSS

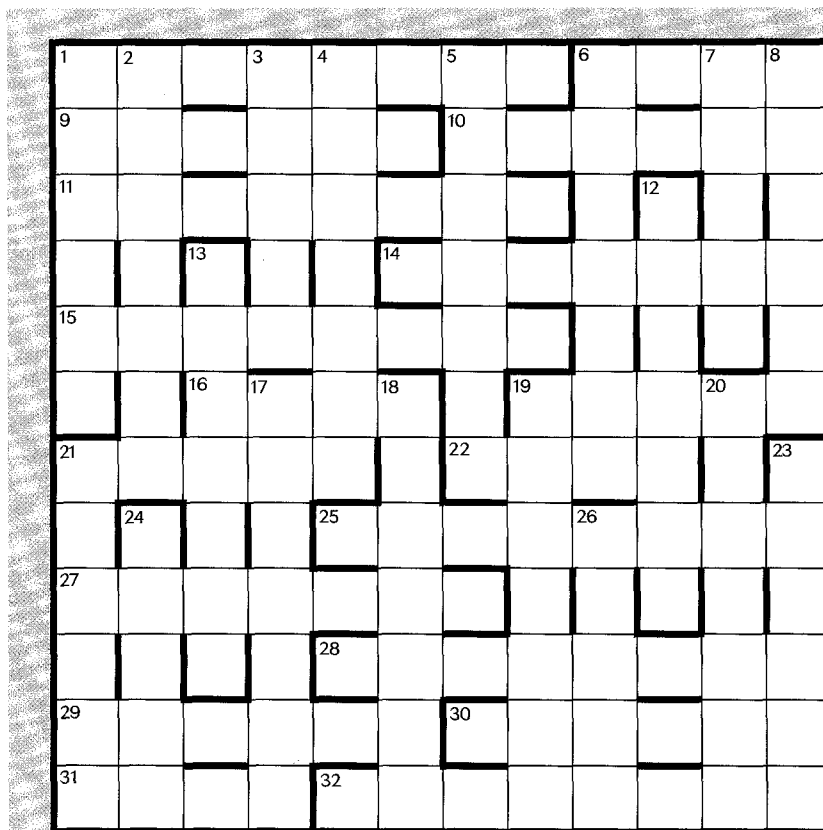
1. Ship armor with Spam (4,4)
6. Tie boyfriend down while talking (4)
9. Cheer for doctor after introduction (4,2)
10. Bothered after vermin finally chew a door at home (6)
11. Trait of the wise story on Metropolis (8)
14. Buckeye's neighbor who initially pruned willow (7)
15. All noise disturbed reporter (4,4)
16. Turning around, hits Dick with a stagger (4)
19. Audibly charge live bird (6)
21. Exercise routine upsetting to Abe (3,2)
22. Stud changes mind of cop? (4)
25. Like new hype, is something with a point (8)
27. Churning is chore Di heeds (7)
28. Set of sheets to be changed in cozy spot (8)
29. End of year in Mexico: you got redder (6)
30. Clipped item new to alien (7)
31. Kitty's comment about spot in field (6)
32. People he confused, getting a pot to speak (8)

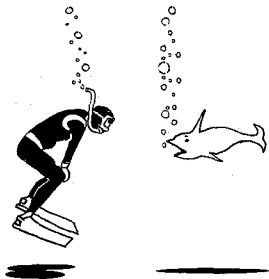
DOWN

1. Might think about chlorine (6)
2. On the other hand, a Conservative's dowsing reclamation (7)
3. Poet running across Drake at sea (5)
4. Playing low jack with a tense face? (7)
5. Excited by Edward, spoke in a chant (7)
6. Girls going around love lairs with snoops (7)
7. Copy flap in front of book before start of test (5)
8. Strip unwary stranger (6)
12. Note trickle conveying eastern crosscurrent (4,3)
13. Wrongly dub Mr. Moto's debut (7)
17. TV sidekick owns or sold kitty? (7)

18. Price indicator for fish-filled strip (3,4)
19. Kiss crown in spot for hay grounds? (3,4)
20. Data in back-lit glittery sheet (3,4)
21. Organ, say, from snake in island road (8)
23. Blast the French jester with peers (6)
24. Smooth shift essential to houseguests (5)
26. Somewhat lighten the heart of a Pole (5)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzclue.htm or send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.





WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

ANDREW YEE, of Brookline, Massachusetts, writes, "A friend and I were having a pleasantly heated discussion about the appropriate use of the word *mortified*. I've used it, and noticed its frequent use, to express horror or shock, as in 'I was *mortified* when I saw the chairman wearing Speedos at the swimming pool.' An informal lunchtime poll seems to affirm this usage. However, several dictionaries define *mortified* as mainly denoting humiliation or embarrassment—for example, 'In my dream I was *mortified* to find myself naked at work.' Can Word Court adjudicate?"

But of course. Usage manuals and the overwhelming majority of recent newspaper citations in online databases agree with your friend and your dictionaries: *mortification* does mean "humiliation" or "embarrassment." At least it does when it isn't being used in relation to asceticism and religious penance (as in *mortification of the flesh*, "self-denial" or "self-punishment") or in one of its specialized obsolete or historical senses, none of which means anything like "horror" or "shock."

I wonder, though, whether a person might sometimes experience second-hand mortification. Could it be that you were mortified on the chairman's behalf when you saw him so scantily clad? I imagine that when Thomas Jefferson ordered a copy of a French book titled *Sur la Création du Monde, Un Système d'Organisation Primitive* and a contretemps resulted, Jefferson felt ashamed on our country's behalf. He wrote to his book dealer, in 1814, "I am really *mortified* to be told that, in the *United States of America* [this latter emphasis is Jefferson's], a fact like this can become a subject of inquiry, and of criminal inquiry too, as an offence against religion; that a question about the sale of a book can be carried before the civil magistrate." If anyone can be said to have used *mortified* correctly in such a context, it's Jefferson.

JONATHAN PENNER, of Tucson, Arizona, writes, "Didn't the word *problematic* used to mean 'uncertain'—as in 'Whether Billy will come home for Thanksgiving is highly *problematic*'? My dictionary does give the sense 'attended by problems.' But saying that problems in a policy or a poem make it *problematic* would once have thudded on the ear. Bastard child of an ancient noun and a promiscuous suffix, *problematic* has now begotten, especially in academia, its own creepy spawn: *problematics*, *problematical*, *problematize*, even *problematize*. What say you? Are *problematics* different from *obscurities* or *difficulties*?"



When a word is given new, more impressive duties, people can be so resentful! But if those duties are worth doing and the word can still handle its old job, too, what's the problem? Actually, for some centuries *problematical* meant "troubling" or "troublesome" as well as "uncertain," while *problematic* (which can be traced back to 1609) tended to be restricted to that last meaning. Now *problematic* is more common in all senses—so what's happened is that the shorter form has taken over most of the longer one's work.

I'm more in sympathy with you about the noun *problematics* and those unwieldy verbs *problematize* and *problematize*. *Problematics* began as sociological jargon,

though, as you obviously know, it has gone interdisciplinary. *The Problematics of Moral and Legal Theory*, by Richard A. Posner; *Negotiating Unruly Problematics*, by Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Susan Roberts, and Andrew Herod—these are fairly typical uses in titles. Yes, these authors do mean something special by *problematics*—and if you want to know what they have in mind, you should read their work. But if you'll be satisfied by a quick and snarky definition of *problematize*, here is one that was offered by Elizabeth Manus in *Salon* three years ago: "In academia, reading a text in a new way is generally known as '*problematizing*' a text." Manus gave that explanation while reporting on a theory then being advanced by Carlyle V. Thompson, a literature professor, that F. Scott Fitzgerald's character Jay Gatsby was a black man passing for white.

SUSAN MOLONEY, of West Milford, New Jersey, writes, "I thought that you needed only a form of the verb *to be* to express the following: 'He *is missing*.' Lately, though, from various sources including newscasters, I have noticed the thought expressed somewhat differently: 'He's *gone missing*.' From where has this *gone missing* come? Isn't it redundant?"

He's gone missing conveys a different shade of meaning from either *He is missing* or *He is gone*, signifying something more like "He has disappeared." American dictionaries that give the phrase are likely to tell you it's "chiefly British." Nonetheless, it is indeed increasingly common in American English. I see no reason to object to it—but may I suggest that we draw the line at the nonsensical *turned up missing*? This turns up surprisingly often, and it comes predominantly from American sources.

Do you have a language question or dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.



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